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Fleming, Ewa

REVELATIONS

OF

SIBERIA.

BY A BANISHED LADY.

EDITED BY

COLONEL LACH SZYRMA,

AUTHOR OF

"LETTERS ON POLAND," "ANGLI I SIEKOCYA," &c. &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE subject of the present work is SIBERIA ; a region dreary by nature, and not only in name synonymous, but actually identical with a vast prison — a locality associated in our minds with the most poignant of human sufferings. As such, it could only be properly described under the influence of those painful impressions, and while the writer is writhing under the most acute mental agony.

The Authoress of the present “Revelations” was one of the numerous exiles who are yearly



Government. In the year 1837, some emissaries from abroad made their appearance in Russia, for the purpose, as was stated by the agents of the secret police, of bringing about a new insurrection in the Polish provinces. In this conspiracy, a great number of the first families in Lithuania, Volhynia, and other provinces, became implicated, and among them was our Authoress ; but in what manner and to what extent she was compromised, is not known, such matters never being divulged in Russia. To afford temporary shelter to the emissary on his passage, or simply to receive a letter from him, or from those who may have been in connexion with him ; or the casual knowledge of a vague rumour of what may have occurred in some other locality, and not reporting it to the authorities, suffices to implicate any one as an accomplice in plotting against the safety of the State.

The dungeons of the citadel of Warsaw, and those at Wilna and Kiov, were at that period crammed with these unhappy victims of sus-

picion. Our Authoress, and other ladies similarly compromised, were sent to a convent of Russian nuns at Kiov, where they remained many months, undergoing the most rigorous discipline that a fanatical sisterhood, especially if authorized by the Government, can inflict on their sex. After a protracted investigation, conducted with a barbarity peculiar to Russian courts, the whole affair ended, by the two emissaries who had arrived from abroad—Konarski and Zawisza—being shot. They were both young men, pupils of the University of Warsaw. The rest of the accomplices in the alleged plot were sent into banishment to Siberia, and had their estates confiscated. Their lives were spared, but each was subjected to the penalty of a death long drawn out, and to a fate from which all human beings shrink—death far from home, country, and friends.

Among those who were thus banished from Kiov, was our Authoress, together with two other gentlewomen—one an elderly matron, the other, a young lady in her tenderest age,

of a delicate frame, impaired by pining in prison, but, as described in this work, of a most amiable disposition, capable of the most generous devotedness.

These three gentlewomen had to make a most tedious and wearisome journey, during the inclemency of a Russian winter, to Siberia. On arriving at Tobolsk, they met a number of other exiles, their acquaintances and former neighbours, who had preceded them thither—indeed, a whole colony of their countrymen, who had been exiled at different periods. The Emperor Nicholas appears, in this instance, to have proved faithful to the threat pronounced by him after the close of the Polish war of 1831, that he would make a Siberia of Poland, and a Poland of Siberia.

From Tobolsk, the exiles were distributed, in accordance with the supposed culpability of each, among the different penal settlements in Siberia. The guilt of our Authoress appears to have been great in the eyes of the authorities, as she was sentenced to be

sent to Berezov, a town in the farthest north ; while the two other ladies, companions of her journey, were located in a much milder climate in the south. This arrangement, however, did not meet the views of the youngest lady, who had become exceedingly attached to her friend ; and, in order not to be separated from her, she besought the authorities to send her to Berezov ; with which request, though not without great reluctance, they eventually complied.

It is after her arrival at Berezov, that the remarks of the Authoress acquire an increasing degree of interest. While sojourning there for a period of more than two years, when she was removed to another penal settlement, nothing escaped her penetrating eye in her intercourse with the inhabitants, whether Russian or native. She describes their manner of living, their hunting and fishing expeditions, and their amusements at home ; their religious rites, festivals, popular traditions and prejudices ; their articles of export and import ; their trade, and the mode of carrying it on

by barter; the animals of the forest, and the birds of the air; the scanty vegetables of the soil, and its minerals; the temperature, and the phenomena of the sky; in a manner at once pleasant and instructive. There is throughout a certain freshness about her observations and remarks; and the picture she draws of the customs, opinions, and habits of savage life, as contrasted with those of our civilized communities, will be perused with peculiar interest.

Never does she allow a single murmur to escape her lips against the author of her banishment. Of the Emperor Nicholas, not a syllable is said; his name occurs but once in the book, and then is mentioned indirectly, in connection with his son Alexander, the heir apparent. Even on that occasion, there is no term used either of eulogy or disparagement. Neither good nor bad is allowed to be said of the reigning family of Russia. This she knew, and strictly adhered to the established rule. Of the Government measures, she found many that were wisely conceived, tending to ameliorate the

condition of the people ; but she could not, at the same time, help deploring that they should be completely nullified, and prevented from producing any of the intended results, by the incapacity of the Russian officials, and especially by those of the inferior grade. Some of these, whose flagrant delinquencies came under her notice, she does not scruple to denounce. With regard to the higher functionaries, she gives them great credit for intelligence and humanity.

In so far the book may be considered perfectly impartial, containing nothing to excite the susceptibilities even of the admirers of the Russian Government—if any can be found in this country. The Polish original issued from the press under the rigorous domination of the imperial censorship, without the sanction of which it could not have been printed ; and it has since—which is rare in Russia—passed through two editions. It is altogether a useful publication, both for the native and foreign reader ; and certainly it is creditable to the censorship in Russia, that permission was given

for its appearance. In this respect, it contrasts most favourably with the censorship exercised over the press by other continental governments, being not only indulgent, but, to a certain extent, liberal; and if the same spirit is followed up, it will not be without its advantages.

Still the Polish original cannot be said to bear no marks of the pen of the censor. All compositions written under constraint are worded with caution and reservation, and necessarily contain many phrases capable of a double meaning. These can scarcely be perceived, and never fully comprehended, by foreign readers, as by the natives, who, initiated in the history of events, can, as is commonly said, "read many things between the lines." Moreover, in some cases, many things have been but lightly touched upon by the Authoress, and may not be clear, while others are so novel as to appear scarcely credible.

In illustration, therefore, of the text, as well as the matter contained in it, the Editor has

thought fit to subjoin some annotations, for which (as they have not met the eyes of the censorship, and might perhaps offend the Russian Government) he alone, and not the Authoress, ought to be held responsible. The Authoress is a perfect stranger to the Editor. All his knowledge of her is derived solely from her work, and he has never had any communication with her whatever. All he has been able to learn is that she is still living, and that after her return from exile she published other productions of her pen; this being her first work. We should indeed be extremely grieved if our publication of her book in England should in any way interfere with her peace and comfort, and should not rather be an encouragement to her to resume her pen, for the benefit of her country and the information of other nations.

The Polish original from which these volumes have been translated, comprises a narrative of events that took place between the years 1839 and 1841; but, owing to the delay caused by the long exile of the writer, it has but

recently left the press. Still this delay does not in the least detract from either the importance or the novelty of the work. Siberia is not a country of progress; transformation and changes are not effected there with the same rapidity as they are in Western Europe; but for ages everything is stationary. Generation after generation may pass away, but the opinions, habits, and usages of the people continue immutable.

Desolate and dismal, unexplored and unexplorable, as Siberia may be, it is not, as will be seen from this work, without its peculiar lineaments of sublimity, amidst all its dreariness and solitudes; and a day will come when its ice-bound territories will be opened to civilization, and its forests vanish before the advances of freedom. We cannot conclude better than by quoting Sydney Yendys' lines on the Polar regions :

“ The earth is rock—the heaven
The dome of a greater palace of ice,
Russ-built. Dull light distils through frozen skies
Thickened and gross. Cold Fancy droops her wings,



And cannot range. In winding-sheets of snow
Lies every thought of any pleasant thing.
I have forgotten the green earth ; my soul
Deflowered, and lost to every summer hope.
Sad sitteth on an iceberg at the Pole ;
My heart assumes the landscape of mine eyes,
Moveless and white, chill blanched with hoarest rime.
The sun himself is heavy, and lacks cheer ;
Or on the eastern hill, or western slope,
The world without seems far and long ago."

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REVELATIONS OF SIBERIA.

CHAPTER I.

Journey from Kiov to Tobolsk—Departure—Prostration
—Government instructions—Tula—Veteran soldier
—Iron-works—Russian currency—Murom Forest—
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ON the 11th of March, old style, 1839, I left Kiov. The sun was shining in all his brilliancy, yet the cold was intense, and no signs of the approach of spring were as yet visible. We passed the Dnieper which was still ice-bound, in a sledge, by the road leading to Orel, and thus I set out on my long journey.

No sooner had we crossed the Dnieper, than the post-horses commenced a gallop. I still tried to catch one more glimpse of Kiov, gazing

towards that ancient city again and again. At last it vanished in the dimness of distance, and then, unconscious of all around me, I could neither see nor hear anything. The only outward impressions that I was yet capable of receiving were the continuous ringing of the bells on the post-horses, ceaselessly tinkling in my ear, and the violent jerks and jolts when the sledge was tumbling up and down, over ruts and deep snow-holes on the road. These interruptions in some degree aroused me for a time from my state of abstraction and complete torpor; but at last even they ceased to produce the slightest impression on me. Arrivals at the station-houses, relays of horses, and numberless upsettings of the sledge, did indeed remind me at times of external objects; but then, an excruciating headache, an acute pain in all the joints of my body, and the shortness of time in which post-horses were again fastened to the sledge, did not allow me an instant for observation; for no sooner had the bells begun to tinkle, than the sledge was again on its rapid breath-stifling course, leaping in and out of holes and hollows, tumbling over ruts, and thus, without interruption, continuing on—on

—on—from day till night, from night till day, without a single intermission.

At the commencement, I found my journey quite intolerable, as I could never sleep in travelling. Hence it may be imagined that my weariness was extreme, and that a few hours of rest had become absolutely necessary to recruit my failing strength. After travelling for two days and nights, on arriving at a station for the relay of horses, I alighted from the sledge and entered the post-house. Completely exhausted, I sank on the nearest bench, hoping to procure some repose, though it were only for one short hour. But from the agony of my mind, all my endeavours to snatch a little sleep proved ineffectual, for although my body was, from sleeplessness, in a wretched state of prostration, my mind, to my great distress, continued all the while active, and kept me awake.

While I was undergoing such indescribable torture, my guard entered the room, and with an authoritative air insisted that I should immediately rise, as he had no time to lose on my journey, and I might very well take my rest in the sledge. Irritated at his peremp-

tory tone—not unlike a steed when made restive—I refused to obey, and, indeed, from my extreme debility, I could not instantly rise from the place where I had hoped I should be enabled to get a moment's rest. The master of the post, an old superannuated officer of the Russian army, and a Russian by birth, looked with pity on my wretched condition, and mistrusting my guard, demanded to see his instructions. On perusing the document, he immediately perceived that the guard was abusing his power, as, on account of my sex and my age, the Government instructions had been framed in a considerate manner, and I, evidently, was not consigned to my escort, without restraint being imposed on them, mitigating to some extent, and as circumstances might require, the severity of ordinary regulations. The document containing these instructions, the humane officer read aloud in my presence, that I might understand my position. Thus accidentally, and for the first time, I was informed exactly what were my obligations, and how far I was protected. Henceforward I could travel more comfortably, and more at my ease ; and as often as I felt much fatigued,

I made my escort halt, to allow me repose.

This was but the beginning of my journey ; yet when I retraced in my mind the distance I had traversed, and the fatigue I experienced on the route—when I looked back, and onward, comparing the distance already completed with the immense space that still lay before me, I felt despondent beyond expression. I thought of the trials which might be awaiting me on the road, and my courage sank. Yet there is nothing to which man may not, in the end, be accustomed ; nothing which he may not be brought to endure. Ere a week had elapsed, my ardent imagination had considerably cooled, and become more hopeful. My frame, also, had lost much of its former susceptibility, and I could easily bear up against fatigue. Now I calmly resumed my seat in the sledge, without betraying the least sign of impatience, without fretting, without any aversions ; but, as if such was my daily business, and had long been the ordinary routine of my life.

I had no curiosity respecting the country through which we passed, or impatience to change one spot for another—peculiarities pos-

sessed generally by travellers, but absolutely unfelt by me. In the extraordinary situation in which I was, I could experience no kind of pleasurable emotion, and I viewed all things with utter indifference. I found nothing to hurry me on—nothing that was worthy to engage my attention, or to stimulate my curiosity. I felt no desire, whatever, to see any of the places or the scenery on the road. My wishes were never outstripping—were never in advance of my sledge. My hours were quite at liberty to pass by as they pleased ; my will had no share, no interest in them.

In this frame of mind, I had traversed a great part of the territory of the government of Tcherniechov, and crossed the extensive steppes of the government of Orel, so called from the city of that name, situated on the river Oka, and at length arrived at Tula. While the horses were being changed at this town, I entered the post-house, driven in by the cold, from which I was suffering severely. Here I happily found an old soldier of the Minsk regiment of infantry, who some time back, when that regiment was stationed in our province, had his quarters in a village belong-

ing to myself. This circumstance, trifling as it may appear, made us consider each other in the light of old acquaintances ; such as had seen the same objects and places, or, at least had some reminiscences in common, which alone speaks volumes to those who, removed from their native place, happen to meet in a distant land. I shall for ever remember the few moments of conversation I had with the veteran soldier.

In the reception room, at the same post-house, my attention was not a little attracted by various articles from the iron manufactory of Tula, admirable for their polish and lustre. They formed an agreeable exhibition, and were evidently exposed to view as a bait to travellers—such, at least, they were to me. Charmed by the display, I experienced a strong desire to make a choice of some of the more useful of the articles, and take them with me as *souvenirs* from Tula. I thought, too, they would be of service to me, as I was going to a country which scarcely possessed any manufactures ; and having but little luggage, they would be no incumbrance. I made a selection of such as I considered

would prove most serviceable for female work, as knives, scissors, bodkins, and such other trifling articles, and a seal, bearing a well-known larch tree for its symbol.* After I had duly settled my account, and was left alone, I was examining my purchases, and admiring their exquisite workmanship, when I fancied I heard a cautious step behind me, as though somebody was approaching, and suddenly felt a small roll of paper thrust into my hand. I instantly turned round, and beheld the veteran soldier, but he had already glided away, and now stood at a distance. He cast a significant glance at me, but was silent. "There is some mystery in all this," thought I; but I made no remark.

Curiosity is never more alive or more acute, than when it is stimulated by secrecy. I thrust the roll of paper in my pocket, waiting for some favourable opportunity when I could read it unobserved, without running the risk of compromising the giver of it. I longed for this opportunity, and as soon as I saw my-

* The larch-tree is symbolical of Siberia; and, in this place, identical with banishment to that country.

self alone, I unfolded the crumpled paper, and read in Russian characters, traced somewhat clumsily, as follows :

“ In paying bills, attend to the paper currency, which is different in this country. You paid two roubles more than you ought. To prevent your being cheated in other places, I enclose for you ‘ Tables of the currency.’ ”

After perusing the scrawl, I signified with a grateful look my thanks to the kind-hearted veteran. Afterwards I tried to make out in what manner I had been imposed upon, but could not unravel it; having made my bargain in copper assignats of the currency, and paid the amount due in the same coin. Perplexed by my calculations, I watched again for an opportunity to speak to the veteran, and obtain from him more accurate information on the subject. From his explanation, I found the system of currency in those parts to be so strange and so intricate, that without the aid of the Tables, and some notion of other technicalities, it was quite unintelligible. Not a single species of monetary currency, neither that of *boumashki*, as the paper assignats are called, nor that of silver or copper, circulated according to its

nominal or real value. It is true that in making the accounts, it was customary to reduce all to copper assignats as a fixed standard ; but in the payment of bills amounting to twelve such assignats, only ten assignats were to be paid, and the matter was considered as settled. Why it was so, is to this day a perfect puzzle to me, and I am at a loss to account for it. As to silver coin in circulation, it was not taken *ad valorem*, but in its relative value to the copper assignats ; and this computation had somehow become so complicated by the fractional reductions of the *kopeks*, that it was quite impossible to get out of the maze of confusion, except with the aid of the Tables, or by means of long practice.

Quite at a loss to comprehend the wisdom of such a monetary system, and still less to appreciate its expediency, but considering that on my farther journey the information might be very useful, I humbly bowed to my informant, and put his Tables, with which he had the kindness to provide me, into my pocket ; and I had, indeed, frequent occasion to consult them. I cannot say that the knowledge of my having been cheated had on this occasion been of any

avail; for no sooner had the vender of the articles pocketted the money, than he vanished, and I did not see his face again.

I should like to have seen the whole of Tula, which appeared to be a flourishing city; and I particularly wished to visit its iron foundries, and other manufacturing establishments, but I soon found how idle were all my aspirations. The implacable tinkling of bells began again to ring in my ears, accompanied by my guard's ill-omened song, ending in the customary *refrain*, "Onwards—onwards—onwards."

Tula, as far as I was able to judge from its exterior, is a beautiful town. It has broad streets, houses with iron balconies and iron gates, and gardens enclosed with railings, which make it appear fresh and neat, and altogether very picturesque. Its environs, however, failed to leave any such agreeable impression on my memory. Immense steppes, covered with snow, like vast winding-sheets, extended on all sides as far as the eye could reach. For many hundred versts on my route, no town, no village, and, indeed, no decent or tenable human habitation presented itself; and all that could be descried on that vast desert, were solitary willows,

standing at great distances from each other on the road, not so much to border it, as to indicate the way to the traveller.

From Tula our way led to Razan. This town passed, we approached the great Murom Forest, celebrated in innumerable wonderful stories and ancient traditions, circulating among the people. The Murom Forest is especially renowned as the scene of countless robberies and murders, perpetrated in old and modern times. The imagination of the neighbouring people seems never to weary of creating all sorts of new stories of this kind, or to embellish old ones. Post-masters and drivers, with fancy more or less poetical, and ever inclined to Oriental exaggeration, here, on this one theme, act the part of national bards, and recount these dismal tales with the greatest eagerness to the astounded and fascinated traveller.

I had much pleasure in listening to these wild stories, in so far as they appeared to be the fruit of a national poetry—originating naturally from a local source—and were not a mere offspring of imagination, artificially kindled and excited. Still, in spite of the strong impression they produced on my fellow-travellers and our

military escort — spite of the solemn and earnest character of their preparations, such as loading muskets, and searching for all possible weapons of defence, before we entered the dreadful forest—spite of all these measures of precaution, and the alarm which I detected in all countenances, I, for my part, felt not the least apprehension.

There exist certain situations apt to exalt man above all events incidental to every-day life, rendering him wholly inaccessible to all such emotions as fear. Placed in such circumstances, we acquire a marvellous degree of independence, enabling us to look with contempt and utter indifference on what may cause dismay and alarm to others; although at other times, and under different circumstances, we should alike experience some disquietude. This condition, which raises us above the ordinary incidents of life, is our strength, our delight in misfortune, and was now my best consolation.

We traversed the Murom Forest, the great theme of so many disquieting stories, in perfect safety, without undergoing any of the dreaded adventures; and indeed, after jour-

neying over such an extent of steppes, tiresome by their monotony, I might almost say that it afforded me a certain degree of pleasure. I remember I felt much relieved amid the grandeur of the sylvan scenery ; and instead of meeting fierce bands of robbers, I saw only a variety of birds, flying singly or in flocks over our heads, and woodcocks dangling like as many caps on the branches of birch trees. The flapping of their wings, while these birds were flying from tree to tree, scared at the approach of human beings, was the only sound heard in the silent solitude of the immense forest. The sight of these beautiful birds, which were very numerous, made the blood of my Lithuanian heart glow with earlier feelings—and mine was the blood of the ancient huntsmen of Lithuania. I sprang up from my seat in the sledge, without knowing wherefore ; while the woodcocks, with a quiet and indifferent look, gazed on us from the trees near the road, as if to mock my inability to reach them. Every time we saw such flocks of these feathered tribes, an exclamation of delight burst from me, and for the moment I forgot my situation and my sorrows.

Having traversed the Murom Forest, we approached the banks of the Wolga, and at last arrived at Nijny Novgorod, a city far famed for its fairs. As we drew nigh, the mass of buildings had the appearance of two separate towns, quite distinct from each other; the Wolga intersecting and running between them. The one division was full of activity, business, and animation; the other regularly built, neat, and cleanly, but lifeless, without bearing any marks either of antiquity, or devastation by time. Quiet, immovable, and buried beneath snow, that part of the city appeared in a somnolent torpor, as if under the power of enchantment, and in its first form of youth, freshness, and grace, waiting for ages the arrival of that deliverer whose destiny it was to disenthral it, and restore it to life and action.

After contemplating the silent scene for a few moments, I rubbed my eyes, and looked again, but all I saw remained an enigma. I asked myself what could have happened. Had the breath of plague passed over the city with its blighting influence? Though it was apparently so fresh, and presented not a sign of decay, still all was solitary and dead!

The mystery was soon cleared up. The portion of the city where we put up, was the place where the celebrated fair is held, called Makariev Fair, after the town of Makariev, whence it had been transferred to Nijny Novgorod in 1817. It lasts five weeks ; and during this season, that part of the town becomes the mart for the productions and manufactures brought from all Europe and Asia, for sale or barter. The Wolga, by which the Baltic is united with the Caspian Sea, carries to this place merchandise from the south and the west. Here, the Calmucks, Persians, and Bukharians, come with the produce of their own country ; the Chinese, with their tea and silks ; the Siberians, with their furs and curious collections of precious stones. These and the like articles of raw produce, and the other riches of Asia, are exchanged for the choice commodities of Europe. It cheered me to see that, by means of commerce on the very spot where I then was, and which I saw so benumbed and almost dead, intercourse was yet maintained between so many nations, differing in origin, customs, language, and religion ; in the colour of their skin and in their dress ; in their physiognomy and civi-

zation. Divided by nearly the whole of the globe, they here meet together on friendly terms, and become acquainted with each other, and humanized.

The busy half of the city, which, at that time, was but just covered with snow, is awake and alive only for a few weeks. During this short period, however, all is activity and bustle within its precincts. Merchants from far and near congregate in the streets ; hotels, houses, and huts swarm with a moving mass of strangers, and are overstocked with wares. For these few weeks of her existence, the disenchanted city lives a longer life than her sister, on the opposite shore, during the whole year.

CHAPTER II.

Russian fare—Companions in exile—Arrival at Kazan—Discomforts at lodgings—Visit from the Police Director—Visit from a Russian matron—Recollections of Easter-day—Invitation from the landlady—Obstacles at departure—Aspect of the city—Variety of races—Costumes—A Tartar chief and his wife.

At Nijny Novgorod, having provisioned ourselves with bread and other necessities, as, on account of the approaching Great Lent we could hardly expect to obtain at post-stations anything but barshtch,* with oil, gruel, and sour-kroust,

* *Barshtch* is made of beet-root, as sour-kroust is of cabbages, set in fermentation, namely, by the following process: A quantity of fresh-pulled beet-root is put in an earthen pan filled with water, and loaves of rye

all which are but meagre fare, we continued our route on the ice-bound Wolga to Kazan. I have used the plural number, because I left Kiov simultaneously with Madame Pauline Wilczopolska and Miss Josephine Rzonzevska,

flour are added to create fermentation. A cover is put over the pan, and hermetically closed with a rim of soft paste, to prevent the air from entering. It is then set in a warm place for ten days, after which it will draw out vinegar from the beet-root, very red and sour. To make a dish of *barshtch*, various other ingredients, as onions, celery, cloves, pepper, bayleaves, &c., are added, to make it savoury. It may be boiled with every kind of meat; and on Lenten days with cream and oil, which is the Russian way, and not relished by our authoress. Many other unknown dishes are mentioned in her book—some even described by her; and receipts for others, as the Polish cake, *baby*, *barshtch*, and the Russian *shtchy*, or sour-kroust, may be found in Mr. Bregon's "Practical Cook." The ingredients, and the mode of preparation of the latter, as stated in that book, are so various and so expensive, that dishes so prepared are real dainties, calculated solely for seignorial or royal tables. The late Emperor Alexander relished the *barshtch*, and so many do: it is, like sour-kroust, medicinal and anti-scorbutic, and much nicer. The Russian dishes, as referred to by our authoress in her book, must be presumed to have been quite different, and consisting of more simple compounds.—Ed.

who were my travelling companions. Both these ladies were destined for other places; but we were to travel together on the same route as far as Tobolsk.

We arrived at Kazan on Good Friday. Being tired, famished, and exhausted, we resolved to profit by the indulgences granted in the instructions, and rest awhile in this city, at least during the Easter festival. We communicated our joint wishes to the Sergeant, our principal guard, and as they coincided with his own, he readily agreed to them. It was, however, necessary to go first through certain forms, and having arranged measures with us, he left us in the sledge in the public street, commending us to the surveillance of his subalterns, and went to present himself to the authorities, to deliver his despatches, and receive farther orders. We waited his return with undissembled impatience, and strove to amuse ourselves meanwhile, by looking at the town. But, as ill luck would have it, darkness came on, enveloping every object, and so even this resource was denied us.

Two, three, and four hours passed, and still the sergeant did not make his appearance.

The darkness of night did not, as may be fancied, in the least diminish our impatience. Hunger, cold, and prostration of body and mind, and the vehement curses of the postillion, who was likewise worn out by long waiting, added beyond measure to our sufferings. At last, the postillion advised us to take shelter in some inn, or a shed, and not remain in the street to perish with cold and hunger; but our guardian escort would not hear of such a proposition, but insisted that we should remain where we were till their commander arrived. Even they, however, were worn out eventually, and we were suffered to put up at an inn.

It was now about ten o'clock; and no sooner did we enter the room, and felt the genial warmth than we entirely forgot our other wants, being seized with an overwhelming inclination to sleep, which involuntarily closed our eyes. A carpet spread on the floor, and a pillow under our heads, was the extent of our wishes—the earthly paradise our hearts sighed for; and directly we ~~laid~~ down, we sank into a profound sleep.

It was not, however, long before we were, to our great annoyance, disturbed by our sergeant,

who brought us otherwise agreeable news, namely, that the authorities had complied with our wishes, and that quarters were ready for us, but that we must proceed to them immediately. We besought permission to pass the remainder of the night where we were, but our entreaties were in vain. We were answered that this was impossible, and that an officer was waiting in the adjoining room who was to see us to our assigned lodgings. We saw there was no remedy, and that we must quit our warm chamber, resign our cherished pillows, and go to the new quarters. Accordingly we got up and collected our luggage, consoling ourselves with the thought that for all this trouble, we should in the end be indemnified by undisturbed rest during the following two days.

It did not take long to pack up, so that the officer who was to accompany us, and who was very considerate, was not kept waiting. But another annoyance was in store for us. At midnight it was not easy to find horses, and our own post-horses were gone. Through the activity, however, of our Sergeant, united to the efforts of the officer, all difficulties were at last overcome.

On arriving at our quarters it was past two o'clock, and we found ourselves in a house which had long been uninhabited, and which gave forth a damp and musty odour, so oppressive as scarcely to suffer us to breathe. The walls were mouldy, and reeked with moisture, and were covered with a swarm of black worms, known in Lithuania by the name of *prusaki* (Prussians), and in Russia by that of *tarakany*; amongst which huge black cockroaches—a different species of insect from the former—crawled, not unlike officers among soldiers, in various directions on the wall.

At this miserable spectacle a thrill of horror crept over my frame. The idea of a struggle at night, and in the dark, with whole hosts of such hideous vermin, appeared to us beyond the possibility of endurance; and we all beseechingly implored the indulgence of the officer to be allowed to pass the night in sledges, in the open court yard, where we could at least breathe freely, and be unmolested by such horrid creatures. The officer felt embarrassed by our request, and we could see that he sincerely desired, as far as it depended on him, to secure us a comfortable night's rest.

"I acted for the best," he said, "in bringing you here. I certainly could have taken another house, which was dry and clean; but reflecting that as you arrived yesterday perishing with cold, you might wish above all things for warm rooms, I chose this; for the other house is exceedingly cold."

"Even if a thousand times colder, if there be such, let us go," we all cried, as with one voice.

The officer instantly ran outside to give orders not to carry down the things. He soon returned, and said that the horses were already taken out of the sledges, but that he had ordered them to be put in again. We thanked him, and offered to go on foot, if but to draw breath in the open air; and thus leaving our sledges behind, we proceeded, led by the officer to the other house. We soon arrived there, and were satisfied with it; for though very cold, we found that at least it was clean and dry. The officer who had so kindly escorted us now took leave; and we once more set about preparing our beds.

Before we finished our arrangements it was near daylight, and whether owing to our shifting

from place to place, or our consequent agitation, our inclination for sleep had by this time forsaken us. But reflecting that we had an entire day for rest, we closed the window-shutters, and threw ourselves on our couches, the more joyfully as we felt confident that we should not be disturbed by any summons for departure. For some time we sought to console and comfort each other, and felt so soothed by our efforts that eventually we fell into a sweet slumber; and I know not how long we should have enjoyed it, had we not been suddenly aroused by a violent knocking at our door. We then heard our Sergeant's voice outside, announcing that the Director of the Police had come, and wanted to speak to us. We immediately started up and opened the window-shutters; and then, with the utmost dispatch, arranged our travelling toilette, and expressed our readiness to receive the important functionary.

On entering, the Director of the Police inquired very civilly how we were satisfied with our quarters, and whether we had slept well. We, in our turn, politely answered that we were perfectly satisfied.

“I very much rejoice that it is so,” said he, “and since you no longer feel fatigue, you will, my ladies, be prepared to set out this day on your further journey.”

We cast on each other a look of extreme disappointment. So much trouble, worry, and vexation—and all this for nothing: not even one single day of repose after a sleepless night, were the thoughts that flitted through our minds.

“I am not sure, Sir,” said I, at length; “but you might, perhaps, know, that by the instructions regulating our journey, we are allowed some moments for repose, if we require it, in all government towns. We, therefore, firmly rely on the favourable tenor of the regulations, that this will be conceded to us, and we have no suspicion, Sir, that you will try to infringe them.”

“This is all true,” said he. “You certainly have this permission granted to you, ladies, by the regulations. Still, as you have already, to all appearance, taken sufficient rest from your journey, you will not, I hope, be the worse for continuing it to-day further.”

To this I said not a word. The func-

tionary seemed to have expected further complaints or solicitations, when he might have relented and yielded ; but, after a few moments' pause, observing nothing but resignation and silence, he said :

“ Well, then, to please you, ladies, I permit you to remain here a few hours longer.” We received his decree with deference ; and he then took leave.

Vexed, disappointed, and quite worn out with fatigue, we commenced packing, determined not to be again tempted, even if occasion offered, to stop on the road ; but, however wearied we might be, continue our journey, as nothing could be so harassing as these interruptions.

Calling in our Sergeant, we announced that we were instantly to leave the place. But all around seemed to be engrossed with the sole idea of Easter, and how to pass it joyfully : nobody was preparing for the journey, or cared to stir. The clerks in the public offices, and the postillions, thought of nothing but the blithesome festival ; and so, taking our seats on our luggage, we awaited the result,

not knowing what to do. Suddenly the door opened, and we received an unexpected visit.

A respectable elderly matron entered the room. I forget her name, though she announced it on presenting herself. She was the widow of a Russian colonel, and had been at Warsaw with her husband when his regiment was quartered in the neighbourhood. She had then formed many acquaintances in that city, and could not forget the happy days she had spent in Poland. On being apprised of our arrival from that remote country, without any friends or acquaintance in this foreign land, she came to assure us of her sympathy, and, according to the custom of the place on Easter-day, to present us with a red egg.

Expressing our sincere thanks to the worthy matron for her courtesy, we accepted her kind present, wishing her many happy returns of the season, and we had the pleasure of half an hour's most interesting conversation with her. After she left us, and we were again given up to our reflections, the sight of the painted eggs brought innumerable recol-

lections into our minds—all connected with this mirthful though solemn festival, as commemorated in our own country. There all the days are devoted to acts of hospitality—to meetings with relatives and friends. During that happy period, the aged and young assemble at festive boards exchanging mutual remembrances, and contracting new links or sympathies. Associations are then formed ineffaceable from memory, and for ever dear to the heart.

While we thus indulged in silent communion with ourselves, the animal nature of man, with its inferior cravings, started up on the scene. Hunger failed not to call up far different associations and recollections; and, along with these, a train of enjoyments—as, tables covered with a variety of viands—fat hams, roasted pigs, stuffings, and sausages; and a profusion of delicious cakes, the famous *baby*, and the *mazurki*. These various delicacies presented themselves to our imagination in vivid colours, and with their ambrosial odour and aroma of spices, quite captivated our senses. We then experienced that nothing so

powerfully excites the imagination as a famished stomach.

The eggs, which the Colonel's dowager had kindly presented us, were swallowed in a twinkling, with a voracity not easy to be described. Poor dame! she little suspected that, in performing usual formalities, she had administered to our wants. But her gift was not unlike a fly snatched by a voracious dog, so little did it satisfy our craving appetite. We instantly called our Sergeant, and begged him to send somebody to the market to fetch some ham, sausages, rolls, or whatever could be got in the town.

"There is no market to-day," was his answer. .
"Besides, no such things are sold here."

"How! Is there no food to be had then?"
I asked.

"I do not know," he replied.

"Surely, neither you nor your companions can exist without food?"

"We ordered our landlady to furnish us with some eatables."

"Ask her, then, to do the same for us."

"But you, ladies, will, perhaps, not relish the fare which we eat."

“You are jesting,” I replied. “Those, who are perishing of hunger, can they be fastidious?”

The Sergeant left us to give his orders. Meanwhile our meditations involuntarily recurred to our own country, and the Easter festivities of our native homes. What an abundance, during that season, exists everywhere, from the stately palace to the humblest hut ! With what cordial hospitality the traveller, frequently a complete stranger, is welcomed even by the poorest man, to partake with him and his family, of the consecrated egg and of his household meal ; the host rejoicing that Heaven had sent him a guest. And thus all, be they rich or poor, are satiated with the good things which a bountiful Providence has vouchsafed. At these reminiscences a sigh arose, and I inwardly prayed that God would preserve my country from being contaminated with foreign manners, that this national custom might never be obliterated—a custom which has, for ages, united, with such a beautiful link, hospitality and the observances of religion.

In the midst of these meditations, we were interrupted by the entrance of our landlady, a

person belonging to the burgher class of Kazan. Without any preamble, she announced, with the greatest simplicity imaginable, that she had a number of friends in the house, and as they were all desirous of seeing what Polish ladies were like, asked whether we would not come down stairs to give them that pleasure ; and we might, at the same time, see what eatables she had that would please us, as she knew not our customs or tastes.

We looked at each other, and could not help smiling. We were desired to act the part of theatrical *figurantes*, neither more nor less, before the descendants of the Tartars. Our self-respect had been aroused and hurt ; but it soon yielded to a frolicsome mood. “ What harm can there be,” we began to reason within ourselves, “ in becoming for awhile objects of curiosity to people of whom we know nothing ? Are they not willing to repay us with reciprocity ? sight for sight—spectacle for spectacle. Such is the way, and such is the daily routine of the world. In fine, we shall be made partakers of their *benit*.”* Having arrived at this

* The *benit*, Polish *swiencone*, is a custom peculiar to Poland, and in part also to Russia. After the Great

laudable resolution, we answered that we would comply with her request, and would soon come down stairs.

No sooner had our hostess passed the door, than each of us thought of nothing but her toilet. We unpacked, and endeavoured as well as we could to arrange our dresses, which, after a fortnight's travelling, had, as may be imagined, neither freshness nor elegance to recommend them ; but to make up for that, we resolved to render them at least as smart as possible, which being done we descended, as we had promised, to gratify the curiosity of the impatient public.

We entered the room, and were led to a place of honour, where we seated ourselves. Some conventional inquiries were made of us, which we civilly answered, and were then silent. But to my shame, be it confessed, I was not

Lent, terminating on Easter-day, no meat is touched, even on that day, until it has been blessed and consecrated by the priest ; whence the name *benit* (benediction) was derived. The display of the viands of all sorts on that occasion is very great ; and the tables are not only sumptuous, but are kept open for friends, and even for strangers. Easter is, on that account, a day of unbounded hospitality.

satisfied with the charm of exchanging my ideas with the company, but looked right and left to see if there was a table which would promise some more substantial fare. To my chagrin, however, I was unable to catch a sight of anything like the longed for *benit*.

All I could see was a table at the window, opposite the door, covered with a clean white cloth (emblematic of the festival), on which were arranged three small plates, one containing a frozen apple cut in tiny slices spread over, with sugar; another embellished with a few rasins; and the third containing some kind of nuts, in shells, or rather husks, of chesnut-brown colour.

The hostess took up these, one plate after another, from the table, and presented us with the contents of each. She entreated, and pressed us to partake of them; but notwithstanding all the civility with which she was offering them, our hunger had acquired such a poignancy that all her kind entreaties were in vain. All the dainties were quite unsuited to our palate. I now learnt that the unknown species of husky fruit which excited my curiosity, were cedar-nuts, an importation from Siberia.

Having waited awhile, and lost all pros-

pect of a more solid refreshment, I asked our hostess whether she had prepared something for us, and especially if there was no meat. However, I was astonished to find from her reply, that in Russia no preparations whatever are made for Easter; that tables are not groaning under viands, cakes, and all sorts of generous food, as is the custom in Poland. In short, there was nothing of the kind, absolutely nothing. All we could get was *barshtch*, with some meat in it, which we ordered to be brought up to our room.

After recruiting our strength with this humble meal, we were all ready for departure. But circumstances over which we had no control deferred this event. From some reason or other post-horses could not be got; our papers were not yet signed by the authorities; and so we remained all day in uncertainty and suspense. At last, towards evening the horses were brought; but the papers were yet wanting. Our Sergeant was running from one office to another like one enraged, to obtain his despatches, but could not get them. In that state of perturbation we remained the whole night. The postillion, losing all patience, took back

his horses, and we ourselves, on seeing what was going on, began to feel drowsy, and leant our heads on our luggage to sleep. At daybreak, the Sergeant returned, not having succeeded in his purpose. Nevertheless, he shortly after ordered the horses to be put on, hoping there would be a chance of finding the Director of Police at home in passing his house. He was directed to do so by those who knew the habits of that official.

When we left our quarters the sun had not yet risen ; but the morning was beautiful. We stopped at the Police-office, and the sergeant descended for his papers ; but he returned sadly disappointed, as the Director, having passed a sleepless night, had just then gone to bed, and could not be disturbed. Thus we were again doomed to wait several hours in the public street. Such delay was exceedingly annoying, as the day was brilliant, and most favourable for our journey. We witnessed the sun rise in all his splendour, and the prolonged twilight, in so large a city as Kazan, seemed like the awaking, or, if I might say so, the unclosing of the eyelids of its numerous population, which in itself was something fas-

cinating. It struck me that those who are first aroused for the daily toils and duties of life, or who are among the earliest risers in towns, constituted, as it were, a separate family, differing from others by its distinct physiognomy. They are the slavish tools to the children of luxury, and are made subservient to their various wants and comforts. Each member of that class appears to be marked on his forehead by this double inscription : " Readiness for labour—Necessity of gain."

I often looked around to see what sort of city Kazan was. As far as I was enabled to observe, during our passage, it appeared to be a fine and extensive town, with a good number of public edifices, and neat private houses, built of brick. Not a vestige of the former domination of the Tartars exists in it, but the progress of European civilization is everywhere discernible.* The streets are broad and well-

* A great fire, which took place in 1815, destroyed nearly the whole town, except the Kremlin and a few churches, most of the houses being built of wood, so that, with these exceptions, no vestiges of the ancient

paved. There is a university, an astronomical observatory, a gymnasium, and some manufactories, all of which make the traveller forget that he is in the capital, and the heart of the country of the once so redoubtable Tartars, famous in Europe by their inroads, conquests, and devastating ravages.

After the lapse of several hours, it was announced that the Director had risen. It then took but a few minutes to sign the required papers, and return them to our sergeant; and now we were at liberty to continue our journey.

The population of the government of Kazan, both on the right and the left bank of the Wolga, consists of a number of various races, as the Tcheremisy, Mordwini, Tchuvatches, Votiaks, Vogulitches, and Tartars, all differing from each other in language, dress, religion, and customs. The Tartars, however, seemed to constitute a majority among the motley crowd. The whole aspect of the country is peculiarly Asiatic. Villages are built of wood, city remains. Its population is about 65,000, one-fifth Tartar.

most of them with high minarets, also of wood. Amidst a variety of costumes, white turbans may at times be seen adorning the heads of the Mollahs, and also long veils to conceal the faces of women.

The Tartar women wear long chemises, embroidered in front with coloured worsted, and this is all their apparel. The men, if they do not belong to the religious order, are dressed in a loose costume, very much resembling the gabardines of the Jews in Poland. It consists of a kaftan with short sleeves, tight round, without any folds in front or behind, and a high pointed cap, with broad flaps on both sides, lined with fur. Some Tartars, also, wear full coats like our dressing-gowns, and small caps on the top of their head, similar to our jockey-caps, or the krymki of the Polish Jews.

Throughout our journey, wherever we stopped for a relay of horses, we were surrounded by a crowd of people, at first curiously gazing on us as visitors from a distant country, and then minutely examining all our packages. Often, as if not trusting the evidence of their eyes, they stepped nearer, and touched everything

that had engaged their fancy with their hands. Women, especially, were very eager in satisfying their curiosity; in which respect we made no difficulty, and permitted them to inspect everything closely.

This politeness on our part, I must own, was no great merit, being not entirely disinterested. The costumes of these nymphs of the Wolga were likewise distinguished by such an originality, that we, on our part, were equally curious to examine them. In permitting them a near approach, we were only pandering to our own curiosity. Nearly at every succeeding station such a variety of costume was presented to our view, as though we had arrived in quite a different country. The head coverings of some were in the shape of tablets, falling in a perpendicular line on the forehead. Some were studded with a quantity of silver and gold coins, giving forth a sound at every movement of the head. Others were fashioned in the shape of diadems, cut out at the top in the form of a crescent, the ends of which projected on both sides, like two horns. These diadems, as well as the tablets, were adorned with a number of plates and studs of brass and of other metals. Some females had

their bosoms and necks covered with silver and gold medals of various sizes, and a portion being bored and strung together formed a sort of costly necklace.

I should not end were I to describe all the costumes which struck me as exceedingly original and remarkable ; and, indeed, all description would fall short of correctness. My impressions, though gathered on the spot, were but momentary, and I noted them only in memory, having neither paper nor ink to make memoranda.

At one of the post-stations between Kazan and Perm, a chief of a village, actuated, as I suspected, less by politeness than curiosity arrived to pay his respects to us. He was no longer young, but looked robust. He was dressed in a broad kaftan, with a turban on his head, and led his wife by the hand, whom he presented to me. A long veil was thrown over her head, concealing the whole of her waist, and her other dress. Her face, however, was uncovered ; but it was horrible to look at, so thickly was it overlaid with rouge, white and crimson ; and her eyebrows were painted jet-black. It bore not the least appearance of a human face, but more that of a hideous mask, or a doll made of

parchment. Her bedizened visage, and her fantastic costume, made me think that we, at that moment, were at a masquerade, and had one of its most perfect patterns before us.

It was not, however, long before I repressed my foolish wonder at her figure and resumed an earnest countenance. Having formerly had frequent opportunities of seeing the Tartars, and not being at all a stranger to their manners, I entered into conversation with this strange couple.

"How many wives have you got?" I asked the Mussulman.

"Four," replied he.

"Why did you not bring them all here?"

"All the others are old and ugly; I never take them with me. This one is but thirty-two years, and I am proud of her," answered he, casting a doating glance on his better half.

"How many children have you?"

"Only four sons and nine daughters," replied he, with a mournful shake of his head, as if desirous we should pity him.

To give his sorrow on that account, a ludicrous turn, I continued:

"They are handsome, lusty maidens, surely,

and you will get a good round sum of money for them."

"But has it not cost me much to rear them? I much doubt that I shall get back my money," replied he.

Such was this worthy and calculating *pater familias* of the Steppe.

CHAPTER III.

Perm—New villages—Ural Mountains—Ekaterinburg
— A roguish innkeeper — Post-carts — Defects of
female education—Tumen — A national relic — To-
bolsk—Compatriots in exile—Devotedness of a young
lady—Departure—Inundation—Bronikov—Counter-
order to return.

FROM Kazan to Perm, we continued our journey amidst a barbarous population, remnants of different nations and races, of which, at a period not far distant, the ancient Tartar Khanate of Kazan was composed. We arrived at last at Perm, which is now the capital of the Government of that name. It is a mean and poor town, on the river Kama, with a scanty population, amounting to only

seven thousand inhabitants. Sixty years ago it was but a small village; but the Russian Government, finding it necessary to have a central place for the new Government, created it into a city in 1781, since which time it has been materially enlarged.

Perm may be said to be at the base of the Ural Mountains. On quitting this town, we found ourselves at the foot of those heights, and could behold their stupendous summits. It is here that the earth has opened rich stores of wealth to human labour and industry. We saw large, beautiful, and populous villages, like as many infant towns springing up around, some of them with hundreds of neat well-built and comfortable houses. Their rapid growth struck us with amazement, and agreeably engaged our attention. Everywhere we saw industry and labour recompensed by wealth and comforts. The soul seemed to expand at this change from low and miserable hovels by the side of stately and magnificent palaces. Far and near we beheld prosperity, and not a single mean or poor cottage along the whole of the macadamised *chaussée*.

At the sight of villages of two hundred to

three hundred houses well-built, spacious, and erected not without some display of architectural taste, all equal in dimensions, in regular rows, and new and fresh as though they were constructed at once, and within a single day, my mind was led to consider what this region, not long ago a complete desert, owed to the powerful hand which reclaimed it—not for gorgeous palaces to be tenanted, by the luxurious and pampered few, or for stupendous monuments to flatter the vanity of the mighty and the proud, but, for what is indeed far more commendable—handsome and comfortable dwellings for many thousands of human beings, in reward for their labour. The spot bore the appearance of being on a sudden created by means of a magic power. That creative power is nothing else than industry, directed by intelligence, and combined with labour and perseverance.


These flourishing villages are occupied by colonies of artizans and miners employed in the mining works. They go by the appellation of *Zavody*. Some of them are the property of the Crown, others of Russian nobles.

The whole ridge of the Ural Mountains is furrowed up by mines, chiefly of iron and copper. Some, however, yield the more precious metals, and also valuable stones.

On our passage over the heights, at the stations where we changed horses we frequently had pictures offered to us for sale—a circumstance I little expected in a region so little famed for the fine arts. They were productions of the villagers; and the objects represented were, for the most part, the Virgin Mary and the Saints of the Greek Church—gaudy and coarse daubings on wood, with nothing particular to recommend them. But what attracted my attention far more was the landscapes, in which these figures, the objects of so much veneration, were represented standing. These landscapes were relievos of mosaic, formed of a multiplicity of various-coloured stones, large and small, not polished, but such as are found in their natural state. Topazes white and pale, amethysts, aquamarines, cornelians, blood stones, emeralds, chalcedones, and others, when so combined, produce a wonderful effect; and, undeniably, the conception is no less original than striking.

The range of the Uralian Mountains is of enormous extent. The road from Perm to Ekatarinburg runs in an oblique direction, and therefore its real breadth cannot be exactly defined; but as the *chaussée* was constantly ascending, and we were passing on it from one acclivity to another for several days, the distance may safely be computed at several hundred miles. The road on which we travelled was well made and even as are, upon the whole, all roads constructed by the Government.

The mountains are covered with forest, spreading over cliffs of colossal height, which protrude in a fearful manner. These gigantic masses, rising from their bases like so many castellated structures—some contiguous, others at greater distances from each other, standing apart solitary, bare and impending, look like giants under the power of enchantment, placed here to combat storms and drifts of snow, which in vain try to shake or entomb them. Others, of a bulk less stupendous, rear their summits one upon another, forming themselves into huge pyramids, while some are thrown into the most fantastic shapes, as though an invisible hand,



playing with their enormous peaks, had scattered them at hazard around. Primeval forests, and trees of centennial growth, spread out their broad branches in vain to conceal the nakedness of these giants, towering in the vast desert; they, through winter and through summer, ever remain the same—and ever shall!

Having crossed this sterile tract, we arrived at Ekatarinburg, another beautiful town of the Government of Perm, far superior to the capital of the province.

This flourishing town lies on the Iset. At the first glance at this river, it became manifest, from the character of its current, that it did not emerge from the Uralian range, as all rivers originating in those mountains, pursue their course westward, and then, branching out in southern and northern directions, one set empty their waters into the Caspian Sea, and the other into the Arctic Ocean. We immediately observed that the currents took a contrary, that is, an easterly direction, emptying themselves into the Oby. The latter, one of the grandest rivers of Siberia, after taking up its innumerable tributaries from the west, the south, and the east—overflowing by its ramifi-

cations vast countries in its course — falls through the Oby Gulf into the Arctic Ocean.

Ekatarinburg is one of the towns founded in 1723, and contains a good number of fine buildings. It is the central point of the administration of mining, with a mint established by Government, and is tolerably populous. It is, besides, celebrated for its mines and iron works, its mineral ores, and its process of polishing precious stones.* Gems of every kind, and all sorts of jewellery, can be had here at a very moderate price. Amethysts, opals, chalcedones, chrysolites, topazes, aquamarines, emeralds, and a variety of rock-crystals, are exposed for sale in great quantities, polished and unpolished; and some are not inelegantly set. But like a

* This town is particularly celebrated for its malachite works, specimens of which, as a magnificent folding-door, superb tables, chairs, and vases, were displayed at the Great Exhibition. The richest mines of malachite are Dimidof's property. On this spot, the rough blocks of malachite, according to Cottrell's statement, are sold for eight hundred rubles the *pud*, or about a guinea a pound. It is not the mineral itself that is expensive, but, from its extreme hardness, the working and polishing are very difficult, and enhance its value.

famished Arab, who happened to find in the desert a bag filled with pearls, and kicked it away with his foot, saying: "These were but pearls," so I cast myself a look of complete indifference at them, obliged to move on, on—and still on. Had it depended upon my own will, indeed, I certainly should have stayed awhile longer. The survey I could then have taken of the mining establishments and the different manufactories, as well as the manner of living, and the social condition of the inhabitants, would, I am sure, have afforded me much pleasure. The well-being of human communities in happy groups, is a matter at once as dear to the heart as instructive to the mind; but the study of such a picture was not for me!

Up to this time the sledge was our vehicle, and the roads being good and even, we travelled at a tolerably good pace. We were constantly moving in the eastward direction, in which we hoped to continue till we should reach Tobolsk. But on our arrival at Ekatarinburg matters changed, and instead of snow and frost, there was a thaw, and the horses waded with our sledge knee-deep in mud and mire.

This was a great disappointment, and a serious annoyance to us. We were obliged to put up at an inn, and our Sergeant, impatient to proceed, went to make inquiries as to the state of the road, and to effect arrangements accordingly. On his return, he brought us the disagreeable news, that on the road to Tobolsk no snow was to be found, and therefore it would be necessary to abandon our sledge.

Nothing could be more provoking. Our combined purses being very light, and we having little chance of seeing them soon replenished, we found it impossible to procure a spring carriage of the meanest description. In this dilemma we were advised to take a miserable Russian post-waggon (*perek-ladna*).

There was no time to deliberate. Our comfortable sledge became the property of the innkeeper, who, "feeling for our situation, as he said, and out of pure magnanimity," paid a few rubles for it to our Sergeant. Unwilling as we were, we unpacked all, and put our luggage, as well as we could, on the new vehicle, and so set off.

Here I cannot help saying, without fear of being accused of affectation, that the Russian post vehicles, or more properly, common carts, sometimes called *tarantas*, are insufferable—nay, detestable. For this seeming fastidiousness, if I should be taxed with it, my sex, my age, and my previous habits must plead an apology. These carts are high and short, and from this peculiar construction, are exceedingly shaky. They are very shallow, and much higher in front than behind, which renders it extremely difficult to sit on them, and keep one's balance. Consequently, at every concussion, I was made to jump up a quarter of a yard high, to the complete dislocation of my joints. At such violent jerks and jolts, tears involuntarily gushed from my eyes.

We gladly left Ekatarinburg, where the streets were all mud and mire, and proceeded on our tedious journey. To our surprise, we had hardly gone one verst from the town, when we found the road again covered with snow. As we went on the snow grew deeper, and wherever the eye turned, its white mantle covered the earth. I now entered into conversation with our driver (*yamstchik*), and learnt,

to my utter astonishment, that with the exception of Ekatarinburg, we should meet nothing but snow through the whole road to Tobolsk. He also told me that all the people at the post-station had been at a loss to understand, how we could wish to exchange our comfortable sledge for our present odious vehicle.

Instantly, a thought flashed across my mind that we were the victims either of some knavish trick, or some misunderstanding, and ordering the driver to stop, I called the Sergeant, and communicated to him what I had heard, at the same time inquiring where he had obtained his information that there was no snow on the road to Tobolsk—a report which, as he himself might see, was not true.

From the Sergeant's answer, it appeared that his inquiries had been confined to our inn, and the innkeeper, from the paltry motive of profiting by the purchase of our sledge, had imposed upon him, and placed us in this dismal plight. Enraged, however, at such infamous conduct, and ashamed of being so grossly cheated, he instantly dispatched two gens-d'armes to Ekatarinburg, with the money which he had got from the innkeeper, to demand the restitution

of our sledge ; and should this be refused, they were to complain to the authorities.

Meanwhile, we went on to the next station, there to await the result. On our arrival there, I was so extremely tired, and felt so ill, that I was not very sorry at the occasion thus offered for a moment's repose, knowing that the gens-d'armes could not return for some time.

After long expectation they at length came back, but brought no sledge. The magnanimous purchaser, who had bought it for several rubles, "in consideration of our position," would on no account part with the excellent bargain he had made ; and the authorities, to whom the case was referred, decided that, as the money had been accepted, and the purchase was made in consequence of a voluntary agreement on both sides, they saw no reason for reversing the transaction.

Thus having lost our cause, and in addition several rubles for the hire of horses for the gens-d'armes, nothing remained but to proceed in our own wretched cart, which, by the bye, we could have given us at every post-station, as we had a right to demand it. Instead of this wheel-cart, however, to our great delight, each

of the succeeding stations accommodated us with sledges, and henceforward we found our travelling more comfortable: at least we ran no risk of being shaken to atoms.

The only inconvenience now was, that on our arrival at each station we had to transfer our luggage from sledge to sledge—an operation which was at first very annoying, as I had no servant. Insignificant as this circumstance may appear, it made me often reflect on the defects of our system of education, in consequence of which so large a class of females are made completely dependent on the services of hirelings. I firmly determined for the future to get rid, on my part, of such an injurious habit, and did not at all regret that an opportunity was then offered for my entering at once upon that practical course.

At last we arrived in the Government of Tobolsk. Those only who have had to perform so long a journey, equally tedious and uncomfortable, can conceive how agreeable it was to be able to contemplate its termination, however unpromising and uninviting might be the spot before us. In painful situations, change of place gives relief; and it is like that which is expe-

rienced by the bed-ridden when they turn on their other side.

Still Tobolsk itself was not so near. We had yet to traverse a thousand versts.* Nevertheless, my imagination had already become familiarized with great distances. The whole difficulty lies in the termination of the first half of our journey ; and the other half, at every step made in advance, becomes by degrees more endurable.

A thinly inhabited steppe, little better than a desert, brought us to the small town of Tumen, situated at 250 versts from Tobolsk. This is the principal town of the district, which is called by the same name, and is divided into two parts by the river Tara. I observed there were some manufacturing establishments here, and among them, a foundry for church bells.

On the bank of the Tara I saw a building erected by the inhabitants to preserve the boat in which Alexander, the heir-apparent to the Russian crown, was ferried across the river, when on his visit to Siberia, if I am not mistaken, in 1835. The boat is lined inside with a green woollen cloth, and is surmounted

* A Russian *verst* is equal to about three-quarters of an English mile.

by a canopy of wood, hung with white curtains. The chair of state, in the shape of a throne, is of red damask, and is set with the Emperor's portrait, crowned by his cypher.

This incidental visit of the Grand Duke is remembered as a great epoch at Tumen. The principal inhabitants of the town esteemed it an honour to be permitted to ferry their august visitor over the river, and the Prince, to mark his sense of the courtesy shown him on that occasion, condescended to leave an autograph of his name on the edge of the boat, and ordered the names of ten of the merchants of Tumen to be added under his own. The loyal citizens to preserve these signatures, put them under a glass. The boat-house is kept locked up, and shown as a national edifice.

Starting from Tumen we arrived in due time at Tobolsk, the capital of Western Siberia. We had been just a month on our journey, having left Kiov on the 11th of March, and arrived at Tobolsk on the 11th of April. We had throughout a very easy sledge journey, there being plenty of snow on the roads, though on approaching Tobolsk it commenced to thaw, and torrents of melted snow were rushing from the

hills. Obviously the beams of the vernal sun began to manifest their genial influence.

Having gone through all the forms at the police-office, in accordance with the usage on the arrival of passengers, we put up at a guest-house (*goscinnica*), which is an inn exclusively destined for the class of exiles to which we belonged, and contains several suites of rooms, in which they are lodged. Worn out with a whole month's constant travelling, I was delighted to find myself in a comfortable room, where I no longer heard the tinkling of the post-bells, and was not pressed to travel on and on, but free to dispose of my time as I chose.

In this delicious state of tranquil repose I almost forgot that I had still a weary journey before me—for I had not yet reached my destination. In the meantime masses of snow began to melt; waters to rush in furious torrents along the roads; and rivers to overflow. In short, everything seemed to prognosticate that all travelling for the present and for some time to come must cease, and the more so as there was no practicable road from Tobolsk to Berezov, except on the river, either through its waters, or over its bridge of ice. Hence I in-

ferred I should most probably remain some time at Tobolsk.

Very soon after my arrival I gradually began to get insight into a life new to me. It was not long before I found myself in a circle of new associates, old and new acquaintances, some even of our own neighbourhood, who had been brought before me to Tobolsk. I there met Major Szreder, a native of Grand Poland, and companion-in-arms of Severin Krzyzanowski; Antony Pawsza, of Volhynia; Constantine Wolicki; Onufry Pietraszkiewicz, of Wilna; Ignatius Strumillo, of Volhynia; Stanislaus and Raphael Kiersnowski, brothers, of the Palatine of Novogrodek. Count Charles Marchocki had arrived only a few days previously. Their company had the effect of at least alleviating, though not dispelling, our anxious longings after those at home, whom it was impossible our hearts should ever forget.

Three days had been agreeably passed in this friendly circle, and we had commenced making arrangements for a longer sojourn at Tobolsk, when on the fourth day we were all three unexpectedly summoned to the Civil

Governor's, who announced that we had rested long enough, and must prepare without any delay for our onward journey; I was to proceed to Berezov the farthest north, and my companions to Tarra, in the south. The destination of the latter was comparatively less unfavourable than mine, Tarra being a district town of Siberia, and, like Tobolsk, situated on the Irtish.

Notwithstanding all the natural advantages of the climate, and many other comforts which Tarra seemed to afford, and which were hardly to be compared with those of Berezov—a town one thousand seven hundred versts distant from Tobolsk, in the remote north—Miss Josephine Rzonczewska, who hitherto was the companion of my journey, requested permission to exchange the place of her destination for mine, and accompany me to Berezov—a noble proof of her friendship, which I felt in the depths of my heart. I did my utmost, however, to dissuade her from such sacrifice for me; but she would not relinquish her determination. Permission was not obtained from the authorities without great difficulty and hesitation, but at last it was granted.

The 17th of April was fixed for our departure, and, after taking leave of our compatriots, we set out on our journey, again in sledges, on the river Irtish, which was still all ice-bound.

We saw the melted snow rushing in torrents from the steep banks, and the adjacent hills, into the river, which overflowed to a great extent, but its ice being thick and strong, and besides, still adhering fast to the banks, had not yet sufficiently risen, as it otherwise would, to float high and free on the swollen waters. It was a complete inundation—a deluge; and in many places our horses had to cross deep and extensive pools. Not seeing his way, our coachman several times ran the risk of drowning his horses in holes cut in the ice, which it is the custom to do in those parts in winter, for the purpose of fishing or to water the cattle.

Our danger and difficulties increased the further we proceeded. Often our horses and the sledges sank into such deep hollows, and into pits of melting snow, that it required a number of people to drag them out. Fortunately two Cossacks of Berezov had been sent with us as guides, and were furnished with a

written order from the Governor, authorizing them to ask for any number of hands in case of need ; accordingly we were accompanied from village to village by a convoy of several men on horseback, armed with shovels and poles, who rendered us good service. Notwithstanding the assistance we thus received, we did not on the first day reach even so far as the next post-station, and were obliged to pass the night on the road.

The following day at noon we succeeded in reaching a village called Bronikov, about thirty-six versts beyond Tobolsk. This is the remotest station at which the road by land from Tobolsk to Berezov terminates ; there being during the summer no road whatever in that northern direction, but persons who go thither are obliged to proceed by water. Bronikov is colonized by Russian settlers.

Our guides, convinced of the utter impracticability of proceeding any further, as many other conveyances had been brought to a stand at this place, and were waiting the change of season, came to a halt, and sent a report to the Governor, acquainting him with our detention.

Unpleasant as it was to remain, perhaps for the space of a whole month, in so desolate a place, consigned to a wretched hovel, without any society whatever, and even without the means of procuring the most indispensable necessities of life, we were obliged to resign ourselves to our fate. Work and reading are the usual resources of females in similar cases, but of these we had but a limited supply. The tenement where we were lodged belonged to the Secretary of the Post, and he had but temporarily conceded it to us, so that we could not employ ourselves in forming a household.

Meanwhile, the Governor received the intelligence of our detention, and thought it better to countermand our journey, and wait till a more advanced season should render the river navigable. The counter-order was on two accounts highly consolatory to me. Instead of being compelled, as I should have been, to spend my time in irksome solitude, imprisoned within the walls of a miserable hut, in a small and dirty village, it promised me the agreeable society of my compatriots ; and after the worry

and fatigue I had suffered throughout my progress by land, and its pernicious effect on my health, the prospect of completing my long journey by the river could not but give me great pleasure, as I should no longer be exposed to the severe jolting of the road, and while secure of good rest at night, might sometimes walk on the deck during the day, working or reading as I pleased, and so I hoped in time to recruit my strength.

We retraced our steps to Tobolsk, not by our previous route on the Irtish, the river being now impassable, but by an ordinary road used in summer. I need not say how delighted we were at finding ourselves again amidst our old friends, and how they also rejoiced to welcome us on our return.

CHAPTER IV.

Sojourn at Tobolsk—Lower and Upper Town—Edifices
—Interview with an exiled Colonel—Walks on the
Irtish—Tobola—Public garden—Visit from the exile
—Advance of spring—Breaking of ice on the Irtish—
Argali deer.

As we had to stay several weeks at Tobolsk, it was necessary to look for lodgings. Another of our countrywomen, an old friend and neighbour of mine, who had arrived shortly before, found herself in the same situation, and we agreed to take a house, and live together.

Spring now approached with rapid pace. Snow was disappearing from the streets, the fields, and all the environs. We lived in the lower part of the town, which was without any

pavement ; but as the streets were laid with planks and large trunks of trees, we were able on fine days to take our walks in town without much inconvenience, and thus make acquaintance with the capital of Siberia.

Tobolsk lies on the right bank of the Irtish. Most of its houses are built of wood, not painted outside and only very rarely inside. They look dusty and mean, and the town has a sombre uninviting aspect. But a small number of the houses are of brick, and these chiefly belong to a more respectable class of merchants. There are eleven churches, all brick structures.

Among the principal buildings, the Governor's Palace holds the first place. It is two stories high ; another, and equally stately edifice, was built by Swedish prisoners, taken at the famous battle of Pultawa ; a third, is the residence of the Archbishop of all Siberia. These three edifices are all situated on an eminence, and may be said to constitute, as it were, the basis of what is termed the "Higher Town."

Below on a plain, or more properly a peninsula which is formed by a winding of the Irtish, lies the "Lower Town." The site being low, and not much above the level of the

river, it is exceedingly damp. Both the towns, as well as all the environs are too level to allow of a single fine view; and the total absence of buildings remarkable for grandeur, either in their dimensions or in architectural beauty, make all the streets look alike. It is not to Tobolsk that the sight-hunters should go to gratify their curiosity. Only those who have long been resident in this place, and have become more familiar with the different localities, can point out any difference between one set of streets and another; such distinctions totally escape the eye of a casual visitor.

During one of my walks, being accompanied by some friends, I paid a visit to Colonel Severin Krzyzanowski. He was a poor invalid; both his feet are paralyzed, and he never quits his chamber.* One of our com-

* Colonel Krzyzanowski is one of the many victims of the reign of the Emperor Nicholas. He had been a most distinguished officer in the Polish army, and fought many battles under Napoleon. He was accused, with other Poles, of complicity in the celebrated Pestel conspiracy in Russia, but the crime could not be substantiated against them, and they were all honourably acquitted by the High Court at Warsaw in 1828. Although a Pole, yet being born in the Ukraine, Colonel

pany, M. Onufry Pietraszkiewicz, preceded us to apprise the Colonel of our approach, and we waited in an outer room while his nurse, a German, prepared for our reception.

In about a quarter of an hour the Colonel was ready to receive us, and being ushered in, we found him sitting in a deep arm-chair, *à la Voltaire*, propped up on both sides, his infirm debilitated body requiring those supports.

His long, thin hair was snow-white—bleached, as it appeared, by premature age, brought on by much suffering, and it fell down on his shoulders, reaching nearly to his elbows. His face was excessively pale, and looked as though it were swollen; the lustre of his

Krzyzanowski was claimed by the Czar as a Russian subject, and without any trial whatever transported to Siberia. For nearly twenty years it was not known where he was, or even whether he was dead or alive; and, but for our author's notice of him, his friends would not, in all likelihood, have heard anything of him to this day. Siberia is a vast prison, and though not walled up, there is no return or escape from its confines. The rest of the unfortunate man's life—his sufferings and his mournful end, as related by our author, will now become clear and intelligible to the readers.

eyes was dimmed, and their old fire quenched. As he saw us enter, his lips and eyes trembled convulsively, betraying a strong inward emotion. We perceived that he tried to speak, and could not. He then by a movement of his hand made us a sign to approach his seat, to enable him to shake hands with us. There were but two of us in his room — Miss Josephine and myself.

It fortunately happened that at that moment the Colonel's mind was perfectly lucid, which, alas ! was not its ordinary condition ; and we could see that only the excess of emotion deprived his paralyzed tongue of the power of speech. At length he recovered his self-possession, and for some time conversed with us, though not without difficulty, yet with perfect presence of mind.

Hearing that our destination was Berezov, a place known to him, having himself resided there fourteen months, he recommended us, when we arrived, to take lodgings at his former landlady's, where he said we should be comfortable. He tried to reassure us with respect to Berezov and the discomforts of that place, and perhaps thinking we should be frightened,

lauded the single-heartedness and hospitality of its inhabitants.

This conversation he maintained with a difficulty painful to witness. We were obliged to gather what he intended to convey, more from his gesticulations and the movement of his lips than from the words he uttered. For some time we went on tolerably well; but at last the Colonel's faculties, exhausted by his efforts, began to flag. He still went on speaking, but we could not help observing that imagination carried him back to the shores of the Tagus and the banks of the Seine, the stage of his past military exploits. He then narrated that we could obtain at Berezov plenty of water-melons, grapes, oranges, and a variety of delicious fruits, which we knew were not to be found there, but were the produce of more genial climes.

This conversation, from its character and the direction it had taken, affected me painfully. I was at a loss how to abridge it, otherwise than by taking leave from our unfortunate compatriot, who, on perceiving our movement, grasped our hands, and continued uttering beseechingly with his palsied tongue,

“Pray stay—still longer—longer.” But apprehending lest the effect of our protracted interview should prove injurious to the Colonel’s health, we left him, thinking we might yet see him again at some future period.

On our way home, in order to disembarass ourselves of the painful impression produced on our mind, we proceeded in the direction of the Irtish. Arrived on its banks, we saw an immense extent of land, as far as our eyes could reach, under water, presenting a magnificent spectacle. In gazing upon this expanse of smooth placid water, shining mirror-like before us, our sight seemed to lose itself in its immensity. At its farthest extremity we could likewise discern another distant plain: it was land, across which again another azure-like stream was running at first so tiny, as to be almost imperceptible, but growing more distinct the nearer it came, gradually widening into something like a broad high-road, which, at last uniting with the river, formed one vast sheet of water. The swollen tributary was the Tobola, coming from the far-west, and emptying itself into the majestic Irtish.

On our way home, we passed by what is

called here a public garden, and peeped into it. It was a small piece of ground, intersected with gravel walks, and containing only birches and a few yellow acacias. Here and there were placed benches to sit upon, and on one side a summer-house constructed of wood. Had the season been more favourable, I should, perhaps, have seen the place to greater advantage; but the trees were now bereft of foliage, and the branches so scanty that they could be counted; besides, the ground was wet and miry, and altogether the garden presented a doleful appearance.

On the following day, in the afternoon, being at home, we observed from our balcony a *dorozka*, with one horse, stop at our door. We were astonished when we saw the occupant of it descending. Count Marchocki, who was just then with us, from curiosity also approached the window, and recognized Colonel Krzyzanowski, who in his state of infirmity could not get out of the vehicle, and was obliged to be carried by two men. It took some time to collect more hands to convey him to our apartment, which was the more difficult from its being on the

second floor. His debility was so excessive that he was carried like a child up stairs.

We welcomed him with great concern and emotion ; and not having any arm-chair in our room, for the support of his feeble and paralyzed body, we made him sit on the sofa, and propped him up with cushions.

During this visit the Colonel spoke with greater facility than on the preceding day. His conversation was more animated, and he even spoke a great deal more as if he were determined to make up for the constraint under which he had laboured on the occasion of our visit to him. To-day he would not have his will in the least cramped, nor his tongue silenced, when thoughts flashed like lightning through his brain.

With inconceivable fire and rapidity, he discoursed on a variety of things and incidents, plunging by turns into the past and the present, and nowhere resting long, as if forewarned of his lucid moments being numbered and but scantily granted to him. He seemed therefore the more eager to catch at each moment, as they flew rapidly by. Within half an hour,

however, his ideas grew confused, and at last got quite unstrung. He still continued speaking with the same volubility as before, but alas ! there was no reason in his words.

I did all I could to bring him back to his former train of associations, but all in vain. His thoughts having once lost their pathway, could by no means be brought into it again.

His servant observing this melancholy state of his master's mind, approached, and signified that it was time to depart, but the Colonel pushed him back. He would not have his visit abridged. He remained several hours longer, sunk in the same distressing state, and without the least shadow of amendment. At last, at nightfall, he took leave of us.

Winter seemed now to be departing, and the weather every day grew finer. Nature awoke from her lethargic sleep, breaking through the icy fetters in which winter had enthralled her. The sun shone with more warmth, and the birds carolled gaily in the trees. It was the 10th of May,* when news at last spread

* The 10th of May here, be it remembered, is the 22nd of that month, according to the Gregorian Calendar now in general use in Europe: the Russians still

that the ice of the Irtish had broken and was floating down the river, which in a few days would be open for navigation. This was a warning to us to prepare for departure.

Our hearts grieved as the old and well-known song recurred to our memory, the song which for one whole month was ringing incessantly in our ears, and still echoed the weary *refrain*, "Onward—onward."

To drive these melancholy anticipations from our mind, we once more repaired to the banks of the Irtish, to witness its struggle with the parting ice, and almost lament its victory. The view had scarcely anything new in itself, recurring as it does every year, and yet it is ever magnificent.

We found the ice already broken. It moved on the blue waves of the river in huge masses, slowly and almost solemnly, amidst thunder-

computing the days of the month, and fixing all the festivals of their Church after the old Julian style. This must be allowed for throughout our author's narrative, as that difference—which is twelve days between the two calendars—cannot be unimportant in forming a right estimate of the Siberian temperature at different seasons of the year.

ing crashes from far and near. We saw the smaller craft of boats in great number trying their adventurous course near the shore which was already clear of all ice-floes; while the banks of the river were thronged with speculators, young and old, men, women, and children of all ranks and stations. This was the grandest feature of the spectacle—grand because all were alive to it.

I witnessed, not without satisfaction, the temerity, the skill, and the courage with which the inhabitants ventured on an element so terrific and perilous—curbed, but not yet conquered, and which still echoed its thundering pœan of war and defiance.

I cannot exactly state the reason, but the spectacle of a man who is resolutely braving danger, with nothing to rely upon but his own strength, has always had more charm for me, and excited more veneration for the grandeur of his character, than all his industrial conquests. This, perhaps, is the foible of our sex.

On our return home, I saw a most beautiful animal called a moral. I mean no equivoue,

for that was its real name. It is, I am told, a native of the Sayan and the Altai mountains.*

I never saw an animal equal it in elegance of shape. It is very much like a deer, or more properly like an antelope. It is tall in stature, slender, and exceedingly graceful in its proportions, with thin feet and short tail. It bears its neck high, and the hair is thin and smooth, and of a brown colour. I was informed that it usually had high horns branching out like the antlers of a stag; but at this season the animal was without any, and on the spot where they grow there was only a soft protuberant excrescence, covered with delicate hair-like moss. This horny protuberance grew so rapidly, that in the course of a few weeks, the animal's head was crowned with noble antlers. The moral I have described was kept in the stables of Prince Gortchakoff, Governor-General

* The moral is probably the argali, or capra ammon, whose horns, as mentioned by Mr. Cottrell, are immensely large, very spiral, and strong. The moral is very shy, and lives in the most inaccessible spots, like the chamois.

of West Siberia. It was very tame, and walked freely about the town.

These animals are generally very easily tamed ; and many people who take a particular liking to them, keep a number of them as domestic cattle.

CHAPTER V.

Preparations for departure—Spring—The Upper Town
—Ceyzik's house — Prince Gortchakoff — His removal to Omsk—Roman Catholic missions—A real solitude—Embarkation—Cabin—Farewells.

IT was on the 12th of May that we received an official notice from the Governor-General to prepare for departure to Berezov. About this town, though a capital of an extensive district, and one next to Tobolsk in importance, so little was known here, that everybody with whom we spoke gave us a different account of it. In this one particular, however, all seemed to agree, that we could not expect to meet there any of our usual comforts. The first object, therefore, for our consideration was

to purchase a stock of commodities for our future household, as furniture and provisions, such as we thought would keep on our voyage. The whole of my time was now taken up with making purchases, packing and stowing the different articles, in which business I had every possible assistance from my countrymen, to whose kindness I was indeed much indebted.


The voyage by water would, I thought, after all, be more agreeable than travelling by land, and it mattered little how bulky or heavy were my purchases. The only drawback was, that I was obliged to limit my wishes from the insufficiency of my means.

The privation which, according to all accounts, I had most to apprehend in my future household, and most wished to avoid, was the supplies of the dairy; for I was assured that there were no more than two cows in the whole territory of Berezov. As for fruit, salads, and other vegetables, I was pretty sure that from the nature of the climate, they were quite out of the question, and could not at all enter on my list; but milk, cream, and butter—how could I be without them? From Tobolsk I could only transport melted

butter ; and as for tea, which is the only luxury known to the Siberians, and next to water is considered by them one of the principal necessities of life—the very idea of such a beverage, as drunk by them, frightened me. I well knew that I should have to encounter it at every step, as it is deemed an indispensable item of hospitality ; and I could never drink tea without cream.

Such are the petty miseries of our life. They are too insignificant to be even perceptible amidst strong emotions ; but in the absence of such emotions, and under an utter apathy of life, even they are apt, contemptible though they be, to assume in our fancy the shape of grave and intolerable evils.

On the 15th of May, spring gladdened us with her first cheerful vernal smile. Warm and genial was her breath, moving the birch trees to spread out their long tresses, and deck themselves with foliage, struggling as it yet was beneath the brown tints of winter. Grass began to sprout, and vernal flowers were peeping timidly forth, and upraising their shy modest, variously-coloured heads to the sun, which tenderly kissed their brows with his



beams, and by his penetrating warmth everywhere imparted new life. Gladdened by the changed face of nature, we resolved to turn the last days of our sojourn at Tobolsk to as great an advantage as possible, and to see more of the town and of its vicinity.

Our first visit was to the Upper Town, which, as I have before remarked, occupies an elevated site, and in so far is drier and more salubrious than the Lower Town, while the view from it over the latter is not altogether without interest. The communication between the two cannot be said to be easy, at least it is not such as might be desired; the new portion, which is on the hill, being separated from the old one below by a perpendicular high cliff and a deep ditch. There are only two ways, indeed, by which the Upper Town is accessible; one to passengers on foot, by a flight of many hundred steps leading straight up the hill, which though the shortest way is very irksome for ascent; and the other for carriages, by a circuitous and broad road in a ravine, dug for that purpose round the hill, and paved with wood. Evidently, everything that the art of engineering could suggest

has been employed to facilitate the communication; but, in spite of all digging, paving, and bringing, in order to diminish the ascent, the acclivity is too great not to be most severely felt. One cannot ascend the steps without losing one's breath, and without being obliged repeatedly to stop for rest.

On reaching the top of the hill, an extensive *plateau* presents itself. It is adorned with a monument raised recently, in the reign of the present Emperor, to the memory of Yermak. The cost of the erection was paid from subscriptions collected for the purpose among the natives of Siberia.

The appearance of the Upper Town is neat; the streets are broad; the air dry, bracing, and conducive to health. The Government House, the residence of the Archbishop (Archirey), the Greek Church, the barracks, and the military hospitals, constitute the principal buildings. The rest of the houses are nearly all constructed of wood.

Among these, a small but neat cottage had, during my visit, particularly struck me by its European aspect. It was surrounded by a plantation of birch trees, which had a very

picturesque effect. I inquired whose house it was, and received for answer, that the proprietor's name was Ceyzik, who formerly resided in Poland, and was celebrated for his most exquisite paintings on china and pottery. He had been, as we were told, for upwards of twenty years in Siberia, and though aged, he still looked hale and strong. On hearing this, we could not help wishing to see him.

The snug, comfortable cottage he possessed was his own property, as well as a small garden attached to it. This was very well kept, and was full of various shrubs, with beds for vegetables and flowers, traversed by carefully raked paths, and even containing some conservatories, reminding us more of our own country than of the wilderness of Siberia. The taste for embellishing human habitations, by subjecting nature to the rules of art, has not yet penetrated to this region. And why so? For no other reason that I can imagine, than because all attempts at refinement would appear dwarfish and out of place in the presence of the grandeur and variety of nature, spread out before the threshold of the humblest dwelling; and I might also say

because the necessity for any such artificial improvements has not yet made itself apparent among these wild people.

Ceyzik's pottery is much prized, and there was a great demand for it throughout Siberia. During the visit of the heir-apparent of the Russian crown, the citizens of Tobolsk ordered at Ceyzik's manufactory a china tray, which was presented to their illustrious guest as a fine specimen of Siberian manufactures, and was graciously received by him. In general, Ceyzik has an excellent market for his wares, and orders are often sent to him from distant parts of Siberia for vases, basins, tureens, bowls, and such like, both ornamental and useful crockery. All these articles are recommended for the elegance of their workmanship and their beauty of design, and are indeed entitled to admiration.

During the week, a great bustle prevailed at Tobolsk. The mercantile portion of the citizens were busied in freighting boats and vessels destined for the Oby Sea, whence, after discharging their cargoes, they bring back loads of fish and fur. Many of the inhabitants, too, were more or less engaged in preparing for

the departure of the Governor-General, Prince Gorkchakoff, who was on the point of leaving Tobolsk for Omsk.* For some reason or other, difficult to explain, he was ordered to transfer his residence, with the whole of his staff, to the latter town, which is the capital of the district of that name, belonging in part to the Government of Tobolsk, and in part to that of Tomsk. The town of Omsk, like Tobolsk, lies on the Irtysh, in a large Steppe,

* The object of this removal of the capital of Western Siberia southward to Omsk, in the Kirghies Steppes, is to establish a road in the direct line to Thibet, and when Russia shall have acquired a sufficiently firm footing in it, to obtain, across that country, a transit for her merchandise to India, if not also for the march of her Kirghies, Tartar, and other Siberian hordes, for the accomplishment of her long-cherished designs on the British possessions in Asia. The distance from Omsk to the frontier of Thibet, is but twelve hundred versts; and, on the way through the Steppes, most of the natives are on friendly terms with the Russians. At Omsk, a school is established in which a number of young men are instructed in the Mongolish Arabic, and Persian languages, and destined to perform the duties of diplomatic agents in Asiatic countries. The University at Kazan is another institution to qualify men for such missions, in furtherance of the Muscovite policy.

on the very boundary of the great Kirghies Steppes.

The inhabitants of Tobolsk were grieved at parting with their beloved Governor, whose humane conduct had gained him all hearts. They perfectly knew how much they were losing by his departure. The different functionaries connected with his staff and their families, in particular, were sorry to relinquish their houses, where they had long been established, as well as the society and comforts to which they were accustomed. Turn which way you might, this was perceptible. Here a spacious house, which a few days before, we saw well furnished and filled with company, stood desolate and dismantled, with but naked walls, doors and windows open, all the furniture in disorder, and the servants waiting the arrival of carts which were to carry them to the river side. In some places friends were bidding each other adieu; in others, they held a last mournful meeting at the social board.

At the river side all was in activity, and an immense crowd had assembled. It seemed as if the whole population of Tobolsk was at that moment congregated together. Some of the

vessels were loaded with furniture, and were destined for Omsk; others, which were to sail in an opposite direction, received on board cargoes of flour and sundry victuals and merchandize for the northern districts of the Government of Tobolsk.

Tobolsk has one Protestant church, but has not any Roman Catholic place of worship. Subscriptions were, indeed, some years ago, collected for the erection of a Roman Catholic church, but, in spite of the zealous efforts and contributions made by the wealthier portion of the Catholic inhabitants, they were found to be quite inadequate for carrying out that purpose. In the meanwhile, the Dominicans, who are established at Tomsk, occasionally visit Tobolsk to perform divine service for the Roman Catholic residents.

At Tomsk, a distance of one thousand four hundred and thirty versts from Tobolsk, there is a Roman Catholic church, and this is the only one in the whole of Western Siberia. The priests are sent thither commonly from the Polish provinces; and their duty is to make annually a round of visits to all the principal places situated within that immense

diocese, extending from the Ural mountains to the river Jenisey in the east, and from the Steppes of the Kirghies to the Frozen Sea in the north. A whole year is hardly sufficient for traversing such an immense extent of territory. Indeed, no one who has not spent some time in Siberia, or has not in some degree identified himself with the manner of life of the inhabitants of that country, can possibly have any conception of its vast extent. Europe would appear narrow to the natives of the Siberian wilderness. In the principal towns where the Catholics may be numerous, the priest is allowed to stay a few days longer; and then the Catholics of all the surrounding places, being informed by circular of his arrival, hasten for the performance of the rites of their religion, such as baptisms of children, matrimonial vows and confessions. After fulfilling his duty at one point, the priest, without a moment's delay, resumes his journey, visiting in that manner all the other places, distant at hundreds and often a thousand versts from each other.

The town of Tobolsk is the point at which the visitation of the clergy of Tomsk terminates. The priest invariably arrives there at the

close of the winter, and does not, after his long pilgrimage, proceed any farther northwards, but shortly before Easter usually returns to Tomsk, where he waits till the snow has melted, and the season of navigation recommenced, and then again starts on his circuit.

The 16th of May had been fixed for our departure for Berezov, but the merchant Brahin's vessel, which was to convey us thither, chanced not to be yet ready, or more properly speaking, what indeed was the real truth of the matter—it was not sufficiently laden, a circumstance for which we were by no means sorry. The longer we remained at Tobolsk, the better it was for us; every moment of our prolonged stay appeared to us a gain from those days of solitude and pining to which we should be doomed in future.

I had never hitherto considered solitude a grievance; on the contrary, I felt at all times reconciled to it—nay, found a degree of pleasure in it. Though I am fond of society, I somehow could easily replace the want of it, and never felt tired when alone. But the solitude which awaited me at Berezov was something appalling, hanging like a mass of deep darkness over my imagination, through which I could see only

horror and despair. Had it been guarded by the thickness of a wall, or by locks and bars, it would have caused us little concern ; but it was, in our conception, a total interruption of all relations with the past, and a seclusion from all mankind.

At last the moment of departure arrived. On the 17th of May, we were informed by the authorities that the vessel was to sail within three hours, and that we must immediately embark. Our things had already been carried on board—thanks to the solicitude of our friends, who anticipated our wishes and diminished our troubles. Woman at all stages of her life, and in all circumstances, requires protection, and feels grateful for it ; and situated as we were, we felt the more a sincere thankfulness for the kind attention we experienced. Taking leave of all with whom we were acquainted, and accompanied by a small escort of friends, we wended our way sorrowfully to the river. The vessel was moored some distance from the shore, in the deepest part of the stream, and we were obliged to take a boat. Several of our company there bade us farewell ; but others, as Charles Marchocki, Constantine Wolicki, and

two brothers, the Kiersnowskis, still remained with us, and accompanied us to the vessel.

The little bark was bound to the Oby Sea, whence it was to fetch back a cargo of fish. It was one of the largest among those which annually go to the Frozen Sea for that purpose, and was of ten thousand to eleven thousand puds.* We were shown to a cabin, the only one in the vessel; it was narrow and dark, and was packed up with a quantity of fur and *wodka* (whisky), which rendered it anything but odorous. However, we had many reasons for valuing it, as it afforded us a convenient retreat, and we could claim it as a corner of our own. It at least separated us from a motley crowd of passengers of whom we knew nothing, and whom we could not possibly make confidants of our thoughts, feelings, or actions.

Before the signal for departure was given, our kind compatriots were busily engaged in stowing, within the narrow confines of our temporary abode, all our luggage, and arranging as comfortably as could be our small household. Meanwhile, we enjoyed the sorrowful sweetness of confidential discourse,

* The Russian *pud* is thirty-six pounds English.

perhaps never to be renewed, and a last exchange of thoughts and sympathies, which was to suffice us for years of long seclusion.

Several hours still elapsed ere all the sailors could be assembled. They were dispersed on shore, some bidding farewell to their families, others transacting business, and some getting tipsy in the company of their friends. But we were not impatient to sail; we ourselves were beguiling the few moments that remained to us in a friendly circle.

At last, to our great distress, the signal gun was fired thrice. This admitted of no further delay. The anchor was weighed. The ship moved northward, and the boat carried our friends back to the shore. As long as we could see each other, our white handkerchiefs waved in the air, wafting our last adieus. God alone could tell whether those sweet accents of my native language were not the last that I should ever hear.

CHAPTER VI.

Journey to Berezov — Mournful train of thoughts — Kutchum Khan and Yermak — Steward — Passengers — Samovar — Boating — Perilous adventure — Gale of wind — Demiansk — Increase of cold — Expanse of the desert — Grandeur of primitive nature.

It was ten o'clock at night. The green and fresh foliage of birches, just then breaking from their buds, was blended with the darkness of the grey twilight. The splashing of the oars, and, at times, the voices of the mariners interrupted the deep silence of night. The hills along the banks of the Irtysh were disappearing, one after another, from our sight. Absorbed in my thoughts. I experienced an agony of spirit, and felt very ill. At each movement of the oar,

I was carried farther and farther from my home and my family, into a region desolate and wild. We stood, Josephine and myself, silent on the deck; our eyes involuntarily turning back, as though we were still chasing after the pasts. Each was following her own train of thoughts.

All around us was night, silence, and wilderness. Darkness was gradually growing deeper, and more impenetrable. Still we experienced no wish to retire, or to separate ourselves from the thoughts which engrossed us. At length, the trees and other objects lost their visible shapes; and all around was obscurity. In our passage onward, however, we occasionally perceived twinkling of lights along the shore, and, in some places minarets dimly looming in the dark. These were Tartar villages, and faintly as they appeared, they happily brought me some relief, exciting a different train of associations, and leading my memory to the times of Kutchum Khan and Yermak.*

* Kutchum Khan and Yermak are historical characters of this region—one being the defender, the other the invader of Siberia. Kutchum Khan was a lineal descendant of the great Ghenghis Khan, and in the sixteenth century, the most powerful chief of all the inde-

Both these men were valiant in the field, both conquerors. They both fought courageously, but not with equal success. The former being vanquished and banished from his dominions, became, in his advanced age, an exile ; bereft of his country, his family, his riches, and his sight, and died an unknown death, leaving nothing for posterity but a bright record of the greatness of his soul in adversity. The latter, after a career of wild adventures and bold exploits, being taken by surprise, by those whom he had vanquished, perished on the banks of the Irtysh, without the least sign of a tomb to mark the spot where he fell.

pendent tribes in Western Siberia. A fort in the vicinity of Tobolsk, of which some ruins still remain, was his usual place of residence. In the year 1578, that portion of Siberia was invaded by a Cossack of the Don, Timofief Yermak, a freebooter, who, on that account, incurred the ire of the Grand-Duke of Muscovy. Compelled with his followers to seek refuge in Siberia, he defeated the Khan, and extended his conquests ; but, being in turn defeated, he sued pardon of his former enemy the Czar, and to obtain protection, subjected to him, nominally, Siberia—a country which at that period was so little known, that he was considered its discoverer.

The mortal remains of both these worthies of yore have, perhaps, found a common grave in the waters of this great river; yet, how different are the results produced by the achievements of one and the other. The dominions of Kutchum Khan were doomed to bend under the yoke imposed on them by the victor; his princely family was carried off captive to a foreign land; while Yermak proceeded from victory to victory, from conquest to conquest, and subjected so many nations differing in their language, manners, and religions, to one and the same sceptre and the same laws.

Thus far in the night I protracted my meditation, until benumbed with cold and tired of the melancholy darkness around, we descended to the cabin.

But the extraordinary novelty of my situation, the reminiscences of the past, and the dim vista of the future, blending together, scared sleep from my eyelids. I saw the day dawn without once closing my eyes.

No sooner did the rays of the morning begin faintly to illumine our cabin through its narrow window, than I arranged my *toilette* and hurried to the deck, anxious to see the country

and to learn where we were. The night had seemed long, having been sleepless, and the current of the swollen river appearing not to have suffered any interruption in carrying us onwards, I imagined that we were at an immense distance from Tobolsk; but, to my astonishment, I was informed that we were scarcely twenty versts from the place of our embarkation. The surrounding country, as far as could be seen, was on all sides monotonous, uninhabited, and a complete wilderness. Not seeing any inducement to remain any longer, I retired to the cabin.

The lower part of this little retreat was below the level of the water, but this did not apply to the upper part, and a small oblong pane of glass fixed in the side, just beneath the low ceiling, admitted as little light as could be. However, as my berth happened to be uppermost, just at that small opening I could sit and read at the dim light it admitted. Thus the berth did a double service for me; it served me for a sofa during the day, and for a couch at night.

In the course of two or three hours we arrived off Bronikow, the very village where a

few weeks previously the snow had prevented us from travelling by land. As we proceeded farther, the whole extent of land appeared a desert; only at long intervals some solitary small settlements were observable, with patches of tilled ground; but even such vestiges of cultivation were few and far between.

But I should now say something of the other persons on board our vessel. Apart from the steward (Prikazbschik) who had the command of the sailors who composed its crew, our company consisted of two merchants returning from Tobolsk to Berezov; and Mrs. Jaszczenko and her daughter, both going on a visit to her son, who was schoolmaster at the latter town. These passengers were left on board the vessel, to manage for themselves as well as they could. They accordingly chose their places amidst the bags of flour destined partly for Berezov, and partly for Obdorsk.

The whole of the company, as may easily be imagined, was huddled up pell-mell amongst these sacks: the passengers used them as they liked; and were, by turns, sitting, sleeping, and eating on them. In the middle, some space was left vacant which served as a common

room. From it one flight of steps led to the deck, and another to the door opening on the water, which being the only passage through which light could be admitted into the interior, was on that account kept constantly ajar.

The 19th of May will for ever remain engraven on the tablet of my memory, as on that day my life was within a hair's breadth of being cut off. At day-break, when the rays of the sun began to pierce our cabin through the small aperture called a window, I got up from my bed, intending to enjoy the fresh air of the morning. Josephine and the other passengers were still asleep, and only a few sailors were on the deck, watching the progress of the vessel. The two merchants of Berezov were below, making preparations for their breakfast, and busily employed at their *samovar*.

Through the open door, I could see the morning was most beautiful. The sun was rising in all his brilliancy, bathing his orb in the mirror-like waters of the Irtish; and with his first rays magnificently gilding all the summit of the forests which extended along the banks; while the interior of our vessel was filled with a

strong stench from skins, whisky, tar, and fish, and was so intolerable and nauseous, that I felt quite overcome by the different effluvia. To escape them I went on deck, but even there the smell of tobacco, with the suffocating miasma arising from below, totally destroyed the refreshing quality of the air. At this moment, a boat, such as is commonly attached by a rope to larger vessels, caught my eye, and, tempted to enjoy the morning air in all its freshness, after a short moment of hesitation, I jumped into it, and was delighted at being enabled to breathe freely.

I remained there sitting quietly for some time, not the slightest idea of danger occurring to my mind, until I perceived that the boat was at some distance from the vessel, and was gradually drifting away. As it was tied with a rope, it could not be loosened at once, and in so far I thought I was safe. Still, seeing it in a moment drift rapidly to a considerable distance, a nervous terror came over me. It appeared as if really I was completely losing hold of the vessel, and was abandoned to the capricious waves.

At one moment, however, the boat approached

so near, that I thought I had a chance of escape. Seizing a rope, I attempted by a leap to gain a projecting part of the side of the vessel; but in leaping, I unluckily failed to reach it, so as to be able to preserve the balance, and by the violent movement I made, the boat being pushed away from beneath me to a distance of several steps, I was left with the whole weight of my body hanging over the water, having for my safeguard nothing but the rope, which I held fast with all my strength.

Vessels on the Irtysh have a quantity of ropes suspended all around; they serve both as a convenience for people in descending and coming up from the boats, and also, in case of anybody falling overboard, of rescuing them from drowning. At first I endeavoured to extricate myself from my perilous situation by my own efforts, but seeing no chance of success, I began to cry for help. But nobody came to my rescue. My screams could scarcely be heard on deck, amidst the continual splashing of the oars, while inside, with the exception of the merchants at their tea, all were asleep. From holding the rope so long, my hands

were benumbed, my strength began to fail me, and I feared every moment that I should sink to the bottom of the river.

In this dreadful suspense I was held for about a quarter of an hour, without any help coming. One of the two merchants, Korepanow, had indeed heard, as he afterwards stated, some screams, but he had taken them for the cries of the rowers, such as were constantly heard on deck, and therefore paid no heed to them, until they struck him as a prolonged and monotonous wailing, coming from one particular spot, which induced him to look out of the door, and he then perceived my perilous situation.

The son of this merchant, a youth of twenty, without a moment's hesitation, leapt into the boat, which was at some distance, and shoved it close to the vessel. Taking me then by my arm, he advised me to let go the rope, and fear nothing. However, exhausted, and almost at the last gasp, I feared to relinquish the rope, my last protection, seeing the water yawn beneath me, as I had even doubts that the young man in such a difficult position would be able to sustain my weight

without losing his balance, especially as he had to stretch across. But my situation was critical, and there was no alternative. With a desperate resolution, I gave up the rope, and he dropped me into the boat, which he had drawn as closely under the vessel as circumstances permitted. Here I stood up; but from the suspension I had undergone, my feet, my hands, and the whole of my body quivered like one in an ague fit.

Josephine started from her slumber at the exclamations on deck from many voices: "The Polish lady is drowned!" In her fright she rushed out of the cabin half-dressed, fancying me already dead.

Nobody, however, was more extravagantly rejoiced at my recovery, and nobody lifted up his hands so high to Heaven, in fervent thanksgiving, as the Cossack who escorted us, and who was also aroused from his sleep by the general uproar and alarm. This sympathy shown by the honest Cossack on my behalf moved me deeply; and I failed not to express to him my sincere thanks. In explanation, however, he replied with as great a *naïveté* as could be, but which went far to disenchant me:

“Your safety, lady, concerns me very near, as, had not God mercifully averted this misfortune, the consequences would have been most fatal to myself.”

The weather next day was very bad and stormy. It was impossible to remain on deck, owing to the excessive cold. The aspect of the country was uninviting and dreary; no population, no trace of cultivation; lower grounds densely overgrown with willows, and the uplands crowned with cedar, larch and fir. At night the wind increased to a perfect hurricane. The vessel was anchored, and remained so during the ensuing day.

It is a tiresome thing to be moored. The play of the billows may for some time engage our attention; but it soon loses all interest by its monotonous uniformity. We had no other means of dispelling our *ennui* than by shutting ourselves in our cabin, and passing away the heavy hours in reading. Fortunately I had a few books with me.

Towards evening, the storm seemed to abate; the anchor was weighed and we went on. But we had hardly reached the middle of the river, when, owing to the great swell, the

vessel began to be tossed to such a degree, that we could not stand on our feet. Some of the passengers being unaccustomed to the motion, experienced sea-sickness. Mrs. Jaszczenko felt qualmish, her daughter was ill, Josephine suffered from head-ache; and at last even I felt faint. Witnessing the sufferings of others, and being at a loss how to prevent them, I now began to think of myself. I went on deck, where fresh air and cold soon dispelled my illness, and I have ever since, during the strongest gales, remained proof against such qualms.

Again we were obliged to cast anchor, and wait till the storm ceased. It raged violently for two days.

Poor Mrs. Jaszczenko could not be regarded without pity. During the storms on our voyage, she lay whole days with her face on the ground, almost in a state of insensibility, and as often as she raised up her head, she fainted. On the other hand, the men once used to voyages suffered nothing; they quietly took their tea, yawned, smoked, or slept.

On the second day, towards evening, the wind again abated, and though the billows

on the river were still running high, we were not in the least sorry to resume our voyage.

The river Irtysh is really magnificent. When at its high tide in spring, it is several versts broad; the current is extremely rapid, and the river is hemmed in on both sides by elevated hilly banks, covered with primæval forests, for the most part cedar. At the foot of the hills, in the deep glens, and on the islands, grow willows in thick impenetrable masses. The water of the river is very muddy, and on this account cannot be used either for drinking or cooking, without undergoing some process of purification. We had happily provided ourselves with a filtering machine for our own use; but for the accommodation of the rest of the passengers casks were kept filled with water, and the water only used after the sediment with which it was impregnated had settled.

The weather continued bad. All the vernal and pleasant smiles with which the returning season had cheered us up at Tobolsk, had altogether vanished, and a storm compelled us again to cast anchor. Only with great difficulty could we on the fifth day of our voyage

reach Demiansk, one of the villages *en route* from Tobolsk to Berezov, consisting of about sixty houses. The distance of this village from Tobolsk is stated at two hundred versts; but in my opinion it is rather a guess than certainty, as there exists not a trace of any road by land, nor are there any verst stones.

Between Tobolsk and Demiansk we could still distinguish some vestiges of agriculture, but beyond that village northward through the whole extent of country, not a speck of tillage was seen. During our onward movement, although we were at the close of the month of May, all the verdure with which we had observed the woods in the vicinity of Tobolsk, *the further we proceeded,* seemed, the further we proceeded, to be diminishing, and gradually disappeared. Willows which commonly grow densely by each other, and are covered with rich foliage, stood erect with leafless branches, tall, thin, and grey, presenting the aspect of extensive woods of Italian poplars, when winter has stripped them of their leaves. Cedars, firs, and larches, with their perennial green branches, were the only trees that covered the nakedness of the vast

forests. On the other hand, the farther we proceeded northwards, the hours of the night rapidly decreased, so much so that when we were a short distance from Demiansk, we had hardly any night, and the dawn of day followed closely on twilight.

The weather continued excessively cold, but the atmosphere upon the whole was calm, until we arrived off Samarov. That village is considered the principal station between Tobolsk and Berezov, and is an important point for commerce, being situated on the confluence of two such great rivers as the Irtysh and the Oby. It is inhabited chiefly by Russians, carrying on trade. Samarov is considered by travellers as lying half way between the above-named towns, and stands at the point which unites the districts of Tobolsk and Berezov.

We had been full eight days on our voyage. During that interval, unmindful of my personal sorrows, my attention was engrossed with contemplating the splendid scenery before me. My eyes strayed in turn over the vast expanse of waters, and on the immense virgin forests extending far behind and before me. Their

limits the sight strove in vain to reach ; imagination alone could supply them, either by stopping, in its soaring flight, on the one side, at the North Pole, the region of eternal ice, and the dreary solitudes of sea monsters ; or on the other, at the rocky wall of the Uralian chain, celebrated far and wide in popular stories and traditions for supernatural agencies and wonders, mere creations of fancy, but which obtain implicit credence from the natives, and are perpetuated by them, from generation to generation, as matters of religion and sacred truth. In pursuing the train of my associations farther, I embraced in them the whole extent of the land from the Oby to the Curalian Islands eastwards. I roamed through wastes of snow, ice, wildernesses, immense rivers, and forests with their lairs of wild and ferocious beasts. It seemed as though I were meeting knots of strangers dispersed here and there on that vast wilderness. Unused to the locality, they were straying amidst its solitudes in a forlorn condition, not unlike solitary groups of mourning orphans, and reduced to the sad necessity of fraternization with the animal tribe, of assimilation

lating their habits to theirs, and even of adopting their manner of living, in order to protract their miserable existence.

Nature, in all her original grandeur and simplicity, such as she presents herself to our view, under her primitive features, with marks typical of those impressed by the hand of the Creator, and as yet untouched and undefiled by man—such Nature has something wonderfully solemn in her aspect. The soul is absorbed in a religious trance, and gliding, as it were, on the intermediate chain by which the Creator is linked with creation, feels itself exalted by contemplating the wonderful works of the creation of God. The heart is then enabled to lift itself in adoration of the Almighty, while at the same time it feels humbled in the presence of such wonders, and of that power which had called them into existence.

Yet this impression, for the moment elevating, at length gave way to melancholy reflections. “What is man?”. I asked myself in bewilderment, environed as I was with the stupendous works of the Almighty. “What is his pitiable destiny in the unbroken chain of the

creation?" He is but an atom amidst the component parts of the universe, not unlike a single leaf of those thick and dark forests extending before my eyes, torn down by a whirlwind, and driven to and fro on the face of the earth.

CHAPTER VII.

Confluence of the Irtish and the Oby—Lowland and upland plain—The Tartar and the Ostiak boundary—Storm—Wild scenery—Stones of various colours in rivers — Kondisk Monastery — Soswa — Distant view of Berezov—Disembarkation—Aspect of the town.

HAVING passed Samarov, we entered on the Oby, a magnificent sheet of waters in which the Irtish is engulfed. It does not, however, disappear immediately, but the two rivers, like a wedded couple, after they have united their existence and their estate, and assumed a common name, preserve their individuality for some distance, flowing together in one current, and being easily distinguished by their difference of

colour. The waters of the Irtysh, which are turbid and muddy, and on that account bear a brownish tinge, contrast strikingly with the clear, dark, and transparent waves of the majestic Oby.

The latter river, thus swelled by the Irtysh and other tributary rivers, and by innumerable streams of Asiatic Russia and the eastern acclivity of the Uralian range, may be seen flowing below Samarov northwards in all its grandeur, traversing an extensive plain, and then branching into numberless channels, each constituting a great river. No mean knowledge is required for its navigation, to avoid being lost in its mazes, though all the currents point one way and tend to a common outlet.

The tract through which the Oby meanders with outstretched branches, at times extending or narrowing its bed, is about fifty versts in breadth, and is broken by the river into innumerable little islands, overgrown with weeping willows. This extensive plain, laved thus by the river, is again enclosed on both sides by high hilly banks covered with forests of cedar, larch, and fir. From these elevated banks begin the highlands, overlooking at a great altitude the winding course of the river.

The cold was insupportable, and the wind, which blew from the north, brought occasional drifts of snow. At the same time trees without any foliage, and the earth without the least verdure, gave no indication that we were at the close of May, or that we had twelve days before seen the spring, and enjoyed its genial, balmy air. Indeed another storm now burst forth, deepening the dismal aspect of the picture, and the wind became so boisterous that we were again obliged to lie at anchor.

Not wishing to pass his time uselessly, the Captain accompanied by several men, embarked in two boats for the adjacent shore, where they cut down a beautiful cedar, and brought it off as a mast. They were not long in effecting their object. The cedar being felled on the nearest point of the shore, was dragged without any difficulty to the river, and then the current carried it without additional trouble alongside the vessel.

The daughter of Mrs. Jaszczenko, a girl of fourteen, went on shore at the same time for a pleasure trip, and on her return, not unlike the dove of Noah's ark, brought back an emblem of nope. This was not an olive sprig, but a bunch

of currants, and a few leaves of crimson peony. Here were indubitable signs of approaching spring. For my part, I greeted the currant sprigs and the peony with as tender an affection as I would old acquaintances in a strange land.

All the way below Samarov, the country was a wild desert presenting not a vestige of human habitation; as though this wilderness was designed to constitute a line of demarkation between the settlements of the Tartar race and those of the nomade Ostiaks.

Farther north, a few yourtas, or settlements, of Ostiaks, were occasionally observable. Whenever we met them, our steward was wont to enter into communication with the inhabitants, going himself on shore, or sending out a boat for the purpose of procuring provisions. In this manner, we frequently succeeded in getting ducks, eggs, or fish; though we were not always so fortunate. Our fare consisted of barley-gruel, or dumplings, made of flour of which we had a good provision.

The stock of bread and meat which we had with us became useless, for what we did not soon consume was spoiled. Loaves of bread turned mouldy; and of the whole

stock, only biscuits were eatable. The rest of the passengers, more experienced than ourselves, had no bread, only biscuits, and were better off.

One day, on approaching an Ostiak colony, we observed our steward making preparations for going on shore. I inquired the reason, and was informed that he was desirous of purchasing a cow, to be supplied with milk during his stay on the wild shores of the Oby Sea. On learning this, I conceived also a desire to possess a cow for my future housekeeping at Berezov. The steward most willingly undertook the commission; and in a few hours, to my great satisfaction, a very beautiful dun cow was brought in a boat, with a supply of hay sufficient for several days. For a treat, tea was immediately made. We had no lack of milk and cream, which added greatly to our comforts; and what was more, I had no longer a fear of getting consumptive without milk at Berezov, and this comfort, so important for me, I had procured at the expense of only twenty-five paper rubles.

The morning of the 28th of May, dawned beautifully, but was followed by a violent storm.

Not anticipating this sudden change, the vessel was in the middle of the river. An alarm was raised, and all was turmoil on board. It was safest to steer for a shallow place and anchor. On one side the bank was high and the current deep, and the gale just carried the vessel towards it; while it drove it from the other, where the river was less rapid and not so deep, and which seemed the more eligible refuge. The vessel was quite at the mercy of the hurricane. The most experienced men were called to the helm, and all hands to the oars. It was feared that the rudder would break, a circumstance which might have led to a serious catastrophe. Strong poles, and the largest oars, purposely kept for such casualties, were brought forward to strengthen it, and by such efforts at last we succeeded in reaching a bay sheltered from the force of the hurricane by a neighbouring forest, and there we cast anchor.

We were detained a whole day. The cold was piercing, and the snow fell fast amidst violent gusts of wind. At the dawn of the following day, the gale had lulled and we immediately started on our farther voyage.

In this part of the world it is only on the shores of the rivers that we find human habitations, for the inland country is entirely uninhabited. But even here the landscape has the appearance of a perfect desert. In our progress we observed but a few solitary yourtas of the Ostiak, and these at a distance of a great many versts from each other. From our first entrance on the Oby, the character of the whole country continued unaltered. It was invariably the same expanse of waters, the same kind of forests, with this only difference, that at every verst onward the country became more dreary and more solitary. Huge masses of rock lay along the shore, and some protruded their rugged, monstrous shapes from beneath the water, while their fantastic forms and gigantic dimensions were perfectly in unison with the wild grandeur of the surrounding scenery.

No small degree of skill and caution was required on the part of the crew, while we continued our voyage, as the vessel had frequently hidden rocks to pass, on which with less caution, she might have gone to pieces. The least jerk, therefore, used to apprise us of danger, and caused perturbation and dismay.

On the shore I could observe abundance of small stones, diversified in shape and colour washed by the billows, and shining in the sand. Not understanding mineralogy I could not determine what they were; and was sorry for it. Some were most beautiful, both transparent and opaque; some all green, others smooth like marble, with veins of blue, yellow, and other colours running through them; and many, and to my liking the most curious, were those which had the appearance of being strewn over with gold and silver sand. Some parts of the shore were more densely covered with them than others, and the stones wanted only polish to be exquisitely ornamental.

We arrived at last off Kondinsk, a village of about twenty huts, inhabited solely by Russian settlers. This place is insignificant, and remarkable only for its Russo-Greek Monastery, transferred here from Berezov on the destruction of that town by fire in 1798. I had no inducement, had there even been an opportunity, to examine the locality more accurately, the weather being exceedingly unfavourable, raw, cold and stormy; and both myself and Josephine were indisposed. She caught cold in

her face, and I was afflicted with erysipelas. We could not, without the danger of aggravating our sufferings, expose ourselves to cold and a bleak wind—we therefore kept to our cabins.

I was by no means sorry that our prolonged voyages, at so inclement a season when the air could neither be warmed, dried, nor purified, was soon to terminate. Every discomfort during the journey is felt the more keenly when persons suffer from illness.

At last we left the Oby and entered on the Soswa, one of the minor tributaries, though still large enough in its volume of water to surpass the largest rivers of the European continent. It rises in the Uralian mountains, and after absorbing in its course a number of smaller streams and rivers, falls into the Oby at no great distance from Berezov.

No sooner had we entered on the Soswa, than all eyes turned towards the north; and it was not long before a shout of joy was raised, "Berezov! Berezov!"

We had been a fortnight on our voyage. In such cases, the sight of the country to which one is proceeding forms usually an event of no small importance; and more especially

on a voyage which, pleasing as it might in other respects be, cannot after all but prove excessively irksome by its uniformity and sameness. An incident like the present, therefore, could not have been felt by us otherwise than as an interruption as gratifying as it was desirable. When the joyful exclamation of "Berezov" was raised, no ordinary excitement prevailed on board. All rushed on deck to see it, if possible, with their own eyes, as though they still were in doubt and could not trust to the testimony of others. I myself left my cabin and shared in the general impulse, eager to get a distant look of the place destined for my future abode.

Curiosity being at length satiated, the next object of every passenger was his individual concerns, and to these we all directed our attention, according to the circumstances in which we were placed. Some betook themselves to washing and brushing their clothes; others were busied with packing up their things and surveying their articles of merchandise. Nearly all wished to appear in their best trim.

It was not until these particular arrangements had been duly terminated that public

affairs were thought of. Then, in honour of our vessel, it was determined to announce her arrival by firing three salutes.

I looked on all these movements with interest, almost envying those passengers who on shores so remote could expect to meet with relations and friends—who had somebody to welcome, or at least to receive them at their domestic hearths. I, on the contrary, was neither expected nor had anybody to meet me, and having no inducement to change my travelling dishabille, I remained impassible at the door of my cabin, like St. John's statue standing on the edge of splashing wells and streams.

At last, drawn along with the rest in the general vortex, I stepped on deck, as I thought I should have a good opportunity to see all the preparations for the salute. I had to wait a few moments, as the thunder-bearing machine had not yet been brought forward; but at length the steward made his appearance and a ridiculously diminutive cannon, of the shape of a good-sized rat, was brought after him. I could not help laughing at his apology

for the war engine. I could not think otherwise than that this was a joke and mystification; yet the countenances of all concerned in the business were full of gravity.

As soon as we had arrived near enough to Berezov, three salvos were fired, and I found to my astonishment that the report was far louder than I expected. Thence I could not help drawing this most instructive moral, which is not the worse for being found in many ingenious fables, that "it does not require to be great to make much noise in the world." Our vessel at last stopped. The anchor was cast, and passengers thronged to the boats all eager to land.

The Cossack who escorted us and whose mother resided at Berezov, was the first that disembarked, having to procure for us a temporary lodging. Josephine and I remained on board, and we saw no earthly reason why we should be in a hurry to go ashore.

I experienced not the least impatience for the Cossack's return, and though hours elapsed and he came not, I felt quite unconcerned. I employed the interval in taking a survey of

Berezov. I could discern two Russo-Greek churches built of brick, and a large house of wood, painted yellow, standing on a hill, overlooking the river. The rest of the town consisted of small wooden houses, the largest two stories high, and all looking dingy and blackened with rain. The town was surrounded, except on the side fronting the river, by a cedar forest, presenting an interminable background of wood.

The Horodnitchee, who is the highest functionary resident in the town, came alongside in a large and comfortable boat to convey us to our temporary lodgings, till we could find some more suitable. Notwithstanding this civility and his apologies for having kept us waiting two hours, with a pressing invitation to us to go on shore with him in his own boat, I could not leave the vessel without some apprehensions and misgivings, as Josephine and I were the only persons now on board, all having gone ashore immediately on our coming to anchor, and everything in the bark being left to take care of itself. Without letting a word drop before the functionary, I communicated

this fact to our Cossack, but he assured me that there was nothing to fear, as all was perfectly safe. Without more words, therefore, we got into the boat, the Horodnitchee and the Cossack with us, and left the vessel and its contents under the safeguard of the public faith.

CHAPTER VIII.

The bay—Lodgings—Want of market—Sour ducks—
Nights with day-light—Breakfast on water—New
Lodgings—Supper—Arrangement of the rooms—
Superfluous gifts—The hostess—Sudden summer
heat.

WE disembarked at the quay in the bay, and found a crowd of people of all classes, old and young, standing on the shore, the women dressed in gaudy, bright colours, their gowns, pelisses, and handkerchiefs shining like so many flower beds, as if it were a fair. Seeing this assemblage of people at one point, not on Sunday, but on a working day, I conceived quite a different idea of Berezov from what I had previously entertained.

Making our way through this throng, we proceeded, in company with the imperial functionary, to the lodgings prepared for us.

After so long a voyage, and confinement in a narrow cabin, where we could scarcely make three steps across, it was quite a relief to enjoy the unconstrained freedom of our feet, and a luxury to be put in possession of two airy, light, and cleanly rooms. The only drawback was, that the fire being lighted in the stove shortly before our arrival, as is usual on such occasions, there was a suffocating smell from it. But the Cossack, who from our guard had become our landlord, suggested we should in the meanwhile occupy the room of his own family; and according to the custom of the country, we were treated with tea. As we were now, however, close upon St. Peter's Day, a period of strict Lent, the tea was served without milk or cream; and tea is a beverage which I could never bear without the latter accessories. Moreover, we were very hungry. But as it would have been anything but good taste to impose laws on hospitality so courteously offered to us, we repressed our desire for more substantial food, comforting ourselves

with the idea of having our own household arranged very speedily, when we could do whatever we wished. When the stove had burnt out, and the rooms were ventilated, we retired to our rooms.

All our luggage, together with the cow, was still on board the vessel; and we were told that we could hardly have them this day, as it was difficult to find people who would disembark them; and besides, our present lodging being occupied but temporarily, it was difficult to provide a place for them. Not seeing much reason, therefore, why we should be in a hurry, I asked our landlord if he could procure us some articles of food from the market, when he replied that there was none in the town.

"No market! Then where do you get your food?" I inquired.

"Everybody gets his food where he can," was his reply.

I never supposed, nor could any such idea have ever entered into my imagination, that a town could exist without a market. Yet such was the case here; and we saw that we could not do otherwise than accommodate ourselves to the exigency.

I inquired of the Cossack whether he could not supply us with something out of his own pantry ; but his reply was, that he had nothing, and all he could give us at that moment was *sour ducks*, which perhaps would not be to our taste.

The hungry are never over dainty. Thinking, therefore, that the ducks, of which he spoke so disparagingly, might not be so bad, and that hunger might easily reconcile our palates to a worse dish, I requested that they should be served. This being done, we found to our great mortification that "sour" was but a euphonious term for meat absolutely putrid.

We could not touch even a morsel of such disgusting stuff, and there remained no alternative but to betake ourselves to bed, without appeasing the cravings of hunger.

There was no night, but the perfect light of day prevailed the whole time. This difference we could not observe before, while we were on board the vessel, through the narrow window of our cabin, for, though it might have been clear on the deck, the light even of noon could but scantily penetrate into our dormitory. But here the case was different ; it was continual

daylight, without any distinction between day and night ; and this the more visible from the houses in Siberia having an excessive number of windows. I can hardly account for the introduction of such an absurd taste in architecture, and one so particularly unsuited to a northern climate.

What with the glare of light streaming upon us, the keenness of hunger, and the novelty of our position, neither Josephine nor myself could for a single moment close our eyes, and we passed the whole night in restless attempts to compose ourselves.

No sooner did the people of the house awake in the morning, than we saw a tea-urn, with boiling water and milk, figure on our table ; but the good people probably had forgotten that we had neither tea nor sugar, as our things were yet on board the vessel.

Josephine and I exchanged looks, and easily guessed, that, after the last day's fast, we were doomed again to a meagre diet. But we gathered strength from resignation, and the samovar being arranged by our landlord's daughter, after she left the room, we filled our cups with water and milk, and baby-like

partook of this innocent beverage. But, wishing to put a stop to our discomfort, we immediately afterwards went out to look for a lodging where we might in some manner or other establish ourselves.

In our search after lodgings, we went straight to the house recommended to us at Tobolsk, by Colonel Krzyzanowski, where, as he assured us, he was comfortably lodged for fourteen months. The proprietor was a Cossack, named Kozlow.

There being no market at Berezov, and not having any servant, it was idle to think of any arrangement for a separate household. We were soon convinced that we could not do otherwise than take board and lodging, as all strangers and even government officials, who arrive here without families, usually do ; and this the more, as no provisions could be got except those supplied at the government contract, and from government stores. Persuaded, therefore, that this was by far the better course, we made proposals to the Cossack to that effect, and these being agreed to, our contract was completed, and people were dispatched to fetch our luggage from the vessel.

Meanwhile our new landlady, on hearing that we had not yet dined, immediately made arrangements to prepare a repast for us, and in a few moments we saw a dish of excellent gruel, boiled with milk, placed on our table, together with some cakes. She also promised she would procure us some game, and other more substantial articles of food for our next meal. By this, and several other things that came within our observation, we were soon convinced that the different reports we had heard at Tobolsk, in disparagement of Berezov, were not founded in truth. We saw plenty of cattle, and of a superior breed. Our landlady alone kept ten cows; and many of her neighbours had as many, and some even a greater number.

We lost no time in arranging the rooms assigned to us. They were three in number, and the floor of each was very clean, and the walls papered. Our things were safely brought from the vessel; and, having unpacked and put them all in order, we were delighted with the appearance of our new home.

Both the landlord and the landlady were all attention to us, and we could even observe that their civility was not unmixed with a good

deal of sympathy for our fate. Their services, therefore, instead of being mercenary, as they commonly are, seemed rather a protection which they extended to us—a helping hand of kindness in distress and need. They both assisted us in arranging our chambers, and were most anxious to make them as comfortable and snug as possible.

Thus we were happily settled in our habitation, everything was in its place and in order. We had even more furniture than we could find room for. Among such superfluities, in particular, was a sofa, a table, and two arm-chairs, which we had brought from Tobolsk. They had been given us by Onuphry Vietrasz Kiewicz, who, in his excessive anxiety for us, thinking we might want them at Berezov, abridged his own comforts, and packed them with our other effects on board the vessel. His gift, which was a privation to him, now happened to prove but an incumbrance to us, as there was furniture enough in the house, which, though not exquisite, and only of rough wood, was yet good enough. These pieces of furniture had, however, the most prominent and the most sunny position—that is, the place of

honour assigned to them, to add as it were some splendour to our humble domicile.

Looking on these objects of superfluity, I often thought how far a noble mind, when not corrupted by fortune, or crushed by adversity—placed though he may be amidst most trying circumstances—can be useful to others. This certainly was evidenced by the example set by the donor of these souvenirs. I have myself witnessed him struggling with poverty, as he was compelled to maintain himself by the labour of his own hands; but in spite of his limited means, he was never weary of assisting his compatriots in their difficulties; by his advice, his intercession, his personal services, and not unfrequently even by his purse.

Our landlady who was well off, thrifty and hospitable, though rustic in her manners, behaved towards us with great kindness, not in the manner in which it is customary to treat boarders in our own towns, where they have bread dealt out to them by morsels, and every additional comfort calculated and bargained for; but she considered us rather as guests whom Providence had brought under her roof. Whatever her house possessed was placed at our

service—as nice cakes, and good cream, and other articles of the best quality, such as made our food, not only palatable, but almost luxurious. Yet I cannot say but that the appearance of some of the dishes was very strange, and at first repulsive to us. Such were the roast duck, with a cold sauce prepared of vinegar and cream, and a meat pudding boiled in milk. But amidst a variety of dishes, which were at each meal brought on our table, we had only to choose, and need not be hungry.

After a day or two, it suddenly became very hot. It seemed as though we had made an abrupt leap from winter to summer. One day we were obliged to have a fire in the stove, and on the next the heat was intolerable. The whole face of the earth was then brown, and the trees naked; but now we saw grass springing up, plants sprouting, trees bursting into leaves; and the hollyhock appearing in bloom. The change was as sudden as it was marvellous.

We could scarcely believe that within the short interval of eight hours, Nature had effected such a great change. What had become of spring? what of that spring in which our senses are filled with such rapturous delight,

and which divides the frost of winter from the sultriness of summer? Here the leap is instantaneous. Yesterday the warmest clothing hardly sufficed to keep me warm; to-day again, the heat is so intense that we are obliged to cool the water we wish to drink with ice.

The day was everlasting, and whether we clothed our eyes or awoke from sleep, day-light was constantly streaming in at the windows, and circling over the horizon. No dew was to be met with here; and the earth had none the whole summer.

Oh, lovely spring of my country! how I shall ever remember, and ever long for thee!

CHAPTER IX.

Rapidity of vegetation—Preparations for the fisheries in the Oby Gulf—Performance of a religious rite—A family farewell—A touching scene—Site of Berezov—Streets—Structure of the houses—Churches—Burial places—Menzikov's corpse—His grave—Graves of other exiles—Classification of the inhabitants—Provisions—A Siberian school.

WITH all these drawbacks, however, I must confess that Berezov did not appear to me so terrible as various reports had represented it. There is a proverb which says, "that even the Devil was handsome when he was young;" and this might be as fitly applied to certain regions in the regenerating season of spring.

In July everything around Berezov, appeared in new and gay apparel. Larch trees were decked

with tiny leaves of the freshest verdure, filling the air with sweet perfume. The grass, quickened by the moisture of the thawing soil, grew incredibly fast. The river Soswa overflowing its banks far and wide, presented to the eye an immense expanse of water, encircling with her arms numberless islands covered with willows, and disappearing in the distance like a mirror of clear azure. Nearer us, it is rolling and roaring, and dashing its foaming billows against the precipitous banks of the town.

Along the shore lay a number of fishing-boats and barges, prepared for a voyage to the Oby sea. They formed a forest of masts, curiously rigged and decked with numberless coloured flags, which flaunted on the air. Smaller craft were plying to and fro between the shore, and the larger vessels freighted with stores and provisions. These preparations, unusual in this remote spot at any other season, rendered the town quite animated.

Our host, though an aged man, had engaged to take part with others in a fishing expedition; the fishing season on the Oby sea, being for the inhabitants of this part of the world, what the harvest season is in other countries.

Everybody in good health and vigour, not having any more important employment at home, participates in it. The necessary preparations being completed, the scene of taking farewell at home followed.

In one of our rooms, screened by curtains, was an image of the tutelar saint of the house, surrounded by a number of other images of saints of less dimensions, decked all in gold or silver apparel. On the eve of parting, the aged man, accompanied by all his family, entered the room, and knelt before this shrine, touching the floor several times with his forehead, and repeating a short prayer. All then arose, and the venerable old man, with tears in his eyes, bade farewell to his wife and children, and to us, whom he considered as belonging to his family. At the same time, he addressed a few words to his wife, commending us to her particular protection and care. Then amidst the tears of all, he proceeded to the place of embarkation.

He was accompanied by his family, and by a large number of his friends, who waited on the shore till they saw him safe on board the vessel.

My heart was full, and tears gushed involuntarily from my eyes. For my part, I am not conscious that greatness, or splendour, or the contrivances of luxury, have any attraction for me, or that I ever longed for the possession of them; but a neat and cleanly dwelling, however humble, where concord, order, and competence reign, has invariably had an uncommon charm for me. In such a place I have always been desirous to live and die. Throughout my life, feelings of the heart alone constituted my world, and from them alone spring all my delights and sorrows, my hours of happiness and of pain. I derived my bliss more from the hand of nature than from society. But alas! this was but a dream—an idle reverie. It was just on that point that the thunderbolt had struck, and at one blow demolished all my joys.

As July advanced, a northern breeze cooled the air, and there were not so many mosquitoes. I now frequently walked out, in order to get a view of the town, and become acquainted, as far as possible, with its environs.

Berezov is a district town of the government of Tobolsk, situated 64° latitude, on the left

side of the Soswa, which, at a short distance from it, ~~it~~ empties itself into the Oby.

The banks of the river, on which the town is built, are elevated. The soil is sandy, and the streets are always dirty and muddy, even during the greatest summer heat. On the surface of the mud, however, during summer, a dry incrustation is formed; but woe to the person who, trusting in its apparent solidity and firmness, should venture to direct his unfortunate feet on it, as the deceitful crust would break under him, and he would have hard work to emerge from the quagmire beneath.

Communication from one house to another is therefore not easy, and boards, large, long wooden planks, and round stems of whole trees, are laid across the streets, to facilitate it. In some places, we observed pools of clear water, too deep to be ever dried up. These pools are honoured by the inhabitants with the appellation of ozera, or lakes.

In our towns such a wretched state of things would never be tolerated; for what inhabitants would like to have their houses built in streets which are impassable for any vehicle? But here, this inconvenience is of no import-

ance. During the whole summer we did not see one carriage pass through the streets. There are no wheels, no carts, no horses, and there are, of course, no roads. In town, all communications between the inhabitants are effected on foot, and out of its precincts, by boats on the river.

The whole surface of the district of Berezov has as yet remained untouched by the wheel. No trace of a furrow is seen on it. Nor indeed would a road be of any use, while the whole extent of land is but an uninterrupted track of wilderness. The few inhabitants that belong to this district, are settled only on the banks of rivers; and it is chiefly by means of water communication that they provide themselves with the necessaries of life, as wood for fuel and building, and the different articles of food and of barter, which they carry on with the Ostiaks and the Samoieds. The rest of the Upperlands, stretching as far and as wide as imagination can conceive, has, on its whole extent, not a single town, not a village, nor even a single human hut. It is a complete desert, inhabited only by wild beasts.

Owing to a complete want of roads from

one place to another, the country presents an aspect totally different from other regions. Only when swamps, marshes, and rivers are frozen over, and when their surface can bear the weight of the rein-deer, can any traffic by land be prosecuted, and at that season Berezov may be seen somewhat enlivened by the appearance in the streets of these most useful animals.

The town does not consist of more than about two hundred houses, nearly all of which are but a story high. The principal reason for the adoption of this style of building is the humidity of the ground. The ground-floor of a dwelling is appropriated to the kitchen, the pantry, and other household offices; the upper part alone is inhabited. I could never explain to myself satisfactorily why Berezov has been commonly described as an island, as it is washed only on one side by the river, and on all other sides is continuous land.

Even the Russians give the place this false designation, with the difference that they speak of it in the plural number, as *Berezovski Ostrowa* (Berezovian Islands). The name of Berezovian Isles is meant for the whole flat,

extensive plain on the right bank of the Soswa, traversed by that river, and intersected by other tributary rivers and streams, which thus form a sort of continental archipelago of islands, formerly called by the name of Berezovian Islands, and which on that account might have caused Berezov, after its elevation to the rank of a district town, to be called after them.

Berezov has two churches, one called Spaska the other Zarnczaina, and both are built of brick. The appellation of the latter signifies transfluvian, the church being situated on the opposite side of a deep ravine, which, during the inundation of the Soswa, is filled with water from that river. At that time, the church is only accessible by a bridge constructed over the ravine. It stands on a hilly bank, from which the view is beautiful. A sombre old forest of larch trees (*Pinus cembra*), surrounds the sacred edifice.

According to tradition, the larches of this forest are a remnant of a sacred grove, dedicated to idolatrous worship by the ancient Ostiaks. Up to the present day, although a considerable number of the Ostiaks have been

converted to Christianity, the neophytes have not discontinued the worship of ancient larch trees, which prevailed among their forefathers.

Near the sylvan church is an aristocratic burial-place, adorned with monuments of stone and marble, though the most recent are of iron. Another burial-ground, appropriated to the poor, lies on the other side of the town, in the forest.

The Spaska church is situated in the opposite quarter of Berezov. Formerly there was a burial-place adjacent, but by order of the Government this has of late been abolished and another opened in the forest. At a little distance from the latter is the grave of Menzikov.

This last resting-place of a celebrated man was discovered only a few years ago, whether accidentally, or after a search, nobody can tell. His body was exhumed, and was found clad in the uniform of his time, completely frozen, and in perfect freshness, as though it had been buried but yesterday. The earth near Berezov never entirely thaws, even in summer, when the

heat is most intense, but merely on the surface, or to a very superficial depth.*

The body of the once mighty minister and imperial favourite was again buried, and the grave marked by a small earthen mound, covered over with turf. It is surrounded also by a wooden rail, which does not promise much durability. No stone, no inscription whatever

* It has been observed that the earth in the northern parts of Siberia is congealed to an extraordinary depth, and probably has ever been so; but it much varies in degree at different places. Hedenström made several trials at Tomsk, and found the ground only frozen to the depth of thirty-five inches, latitude $56^{\circ} 50'$. At Yakutsk, again, 62° north latitude, the Russian American Company bored for water in the court-yard of their establishment to the depth of three hundred and eighty feet; and the ground was still frozen and no water found. In that same town the inhabitants have cellars under all their houses made in the frozen ground, precisely as ice-houses are made in other countries. In summer, when the heat is as excessive as the cold is in winter, they place all their fresh provisions, such as milk, meat, and fish in these cellars, where everything becomes frozen in two hours. They likewise construct their graves in the same way, except that they make large fires above, and burn the holes in the ground.

announces who lies beneath; and in a short time, it is most probable no trace will remain on earth commemorative of a man born under such a singular star—who rose from the humblest class of society to the highest dignities—who held for a long time the balance of nations in his hand—who had placed his descendants within a single footstep of the throne—and who, rapid as had been his rise, was still more rapidly precipitated into the abyss of misery and oblivion.

The inhabitants of Berezov preserve as yet in their memory the particular spot where Menzikov, during his banishment, lived; and where stood the hut in which he lodged, near the Spaska church. The hut, unfortunately, was burnt down during the great fire of 1798, by which nearly the whole town was reduced to ashes.

It is also related, on no other authority than what the people have heard from older persons, that subsequent to his downfall, Menzikov became very religious, that he used to go with his axe to the forest to fell the trees, and that he died a *starost*, or an elder of the Spaska church.

At the Spaska church, a missal is preserved, a gift from the Princess Olga Dolgoruki, another great personage, who was banished to Berezov. I have myself seen the missal, which is inscribed with her autograph. I was also told that in the same church two children of Menzikov's daughter were buried. In what spot Prince Dolgoruki and Osterman were buried nobody could inform me. Berezov might be said to be the Necropolis of Russian greatness.

The population of the town consists chiefly of Cossacks, on whom it is incumbent to watch over the security of the country; but the whole being in a state of perfect peace, their service is limited to keeping watch at the few government offices, and carrying official messages from this place to Tobolsk. At other times, they devote themselves to commercial pursuits, which are for the most part carried on with the Ostiaks, and constitute the principal and almost the sole source of their livelihood and their wealth. From his infancy, the Cossack of this place is impressed with the idea that he is born for commerce, and being trained to it by his parents, becomes acquainted with all its details and mysteries.

There are several shops in the town, in which different articles can be purchased, as calico, tea, sugar, confectionary, wine, &c. Flour and other victuals, or what is commonly termed "the staff of life," are, according to the quantity required for home consumption, bought by the inhabitants from vessels when they arrive, and laid up for the whole winter.

There being no market, every householder must procure provisions elsewhere, or devise some means by which he may be enabled to obtain them himself. The river and the forest thus become the market-place, and skill and perseverance are disbursed in place of money.

Berezov is divided into two parishes of the Russo-Greek Church, and is the residence of a Pope and Protopope. It is also the seat of the district government, and of its jurisdiction in all its different ramifications, in accordance with the general regulation of the whole Russian empire, with the sole exception of the so-styled Marshal of the Noblesse, there being nobody here whom that dignitary could represent. The whole duty of the functionaries, after all, is almost nominal, as scarcely any cases come under their consideration.

In accordance with the general regulations, there is likewise a district school, composed of two classes, where the Cossacks, and nearly all the citizens, send their children to be taught reading and writing. The studies do not, however, extend very far; for no sooner do the parents perceive that their children have learned reading with facility, and the art of casting up accounts with the Ostiaks, than they take them away from school, as, in their opinion, any further learning would only be a waste of time.


CHAPTER X.

Mosquitoes — Visits — Bashfulness of a hostess — A merchant widow's house — Objects of luxury and European taste — Not at home — Summer heat — Courtesy of the Berezovian maids — Flight — Arrival of Madame X — A Berezovian Bloomer — A Polish maid-servant.

WHAT a pity that one cannot profit by the fine but short summer moments at Berezov. The sight of a beautiful forest almost touching the threshold of the house, the deep shade beneath the far spreading branches of tall cedars, or of deep green larches, was deliciously inviting, and we often were tempted to seek refuge amidst it from the piercing rays of the sun; but no sooner did we venture into the shade, than we were surrounded by dense

swarms of mosquitoes, which starting from their ambuscades, attacked us on all sides. There was no possibility of repelling such myriads of blood-thirsty assailants. Yet after covering our faces with visors of hair, with which the lady of General Potemkin had provided us at Tobolsk, and our hands with thick gloves, and being otherwise armed, *cap-à-pie*, we stoutly marched on, nothing daunted, to the encounter, repelling their attacks as courageously as we could ; but all our efforts proved unsuccessful. After a short and desperate combat, we were obliged to beat a retreat, blistered from head to foot. Finding it quite impossible to make excursions in the forest, we resolved to cultivate our acquaintance with the persons of the place ; and, as the Horodnitchee was the principal inhabitant, and had already several times called on us, we thought it would be most becoming to commence our round of visits with him.

We accordingly called at his house, and were ushered in. Here we were welcomed by a young and handsome lady, who proved to be his wife. She said not a word, but showed by a pleasing smile that she was gratified at our



visit. Presently she left the room to look for her husband, who in a short time arrived. Meanwhile we looked round the apartments, which were particularly neat and clean.

A few minutes afterwards, the youthful lady of the house reappeared, more handsomely dressed. She was preceded by a servant with a tray loaded with a variety of sweetmeats and confectionary, of which, with divers signs and smiles, but not uttering a single word, she politely pressed us to partake. The expression of her countenance was that of exceeding bashfulness; but as she was very young, handsome, and of a mild disposition, I began to feel an instantaneous affection for her, such as is frequently experienced at the sight of a shy child shrinking at the appearance of strangers, and displaying only to the family circle all the genuine charms and beauty of her character.

I endeavoured in every possible way to reassure her, and therefore frequently addressed my conversation solely to herself. She appeared, however, scarcely to understand my friendly wishes, for her replies to my remarks were whispered in her husband's ears, and he, like an echo, repeated her words aloud. Fearing lest

our first visit would prove too severe a task for the young hostess, I rose to take leave, when she suddenly exclaimed, "Da Kakje? Samovar!" (How can you leave us? the tea-urn!) These were the first words we had heard her utter.

Thinking that our departure, without complying with her request, might be construed by her husband into a want of courtesy; and that she herself might feel grieved, we consented to remain to tea, and then separated, as I had good reason to think, on the best possible terms.

Having once started on our wandering tour, after leaving the Horodnitchee's house, we thought we might at the same time call on a Madame Nizegorodtyow, the relict of a wealthy merchant, to whom we had been furnished with a letter of introduction by her daughter at Tobolsk. This lady's residence was the largest in the town, and by far the finest. On my first arrival at Berezov I was, as I have already described, particularly struck by its appearance. It comprised a central structure, occupied by herself and her family, and two wings, each one story high, appropriated to the servants. The court-yard was enclosed with a strong wooden fence, which, as well as the whole mansion, was

painted yellow; contrasting strongly with the rest of the dingy wooden houses of the town, and the dark forest scenery in the background.

We were just entering the first open door, when we were met by a young man, who, in a most polite manner, offered to lead us to the mistress of the house. Having conducted us through a suite of apartments, well furnished and exquisitely clean, he showed us to a drawing-room, when, as we looked round, he suddenly disappeared, not unlike an ethereal substance dissolved in space. We had some misgivings—and we were not far wrong—that he was a little annoyed at the incompleteness of his toilet, as he was attired in his dressing-gown. But we waited and waited, and nobody appeared, though we every moment expected to see the mistress of the house. Meanwhile, we felt not the least impatient, as the position in which we happened to be placed rather amused us by its novelty. Moreover, everything on which we fixed our eyes struck us with amazement, by its rarity, exquisiteness and even luxury. In any other part of the world, these objects would certainly not have so absorbed my attention; but to meet such objects of splendour,

and of European taste and industry at Berezov, in the land of the wild Ostiaks—at this extremity and last nook of the world—was, I must confess, what I never could have anticipated.

The mansion—for it might justly be styled such—was spacious and commodious, containing stately apartments, with lofty windows, commanding in front a view of the boundless sheet of water and magnificent forest. Every pane of glass was exquisitely clean and spotless; rows of flower-pots stood in the windows, with all sorts of plants, vigorous and fresh; and all the more charming, from their being so rare in that desolate region. Mirrors of enormous size, mahogany furniture, paintings, crystal and china vases and silver plate, bore testimony to the wealth of their owner, and to her European taste and refinement. With such things around, one could easily forget that the locality was Berezov; and forget I did. For a moment, even the purpose of my visit passed from my mind, so completely was I absorbed in delightful recollections.

At length the door opened, and I was reminded of the object for which I had come. I raised my eyes, but instead of the lady of the

house, for whom we had so long been waiting, the young man whom we had first encountered again presented himself, now attired in a stylish velvet dressing-gown.

This Siberian beau, we now learned, was the widow's son. He said that he came to inform us that his mother was not at home ; but had gone to call on her daughter, the wife of the director of police. If we would wait, however, he would immediately send a message to apprise her of our visit, and he was sure she would eagerly return. Of course, we could not consent to such an arrangement, and took leave, promising to call some other day.

The heat now grew insupportable, and kept us imprisoned in-doors. There was no dew at night, no cooling breeze of sunset, no fresh air of morning ; but ever and ever incessant sunshine burning and scorching unremittingly. The sun made scarcely a momentary dip under the horizon, even then not entirely concealing his burning rays, and soon he lifted up his fiery orb again. It was impossible to breathe—impossible to sit in a chair—impossible to do any work. Utter lassitude crept over the whole frame, repressing all vigour and vital power. I

moved from place to place in search of relief, hoping to find some cool spot, but in vain. Sometimes I threw myself on the floor, or dragged my steps to a bath, where I deluged myself with buckets of cold water. This certainly was refreshing, and did me good ; but the benefit derived from even such a mode of cooling would be but momentary, and was far from making me insensible to the overpowering hot blast of the surrounding atmosphere. From this I became so debilitated, that my feet began to swell, and I grew apprehensive of dropsy.

We were told that the current of air on the river side, was usually far cooler than in other places. Towards evening, when the heat augmented in intensity, we would proceed to this favoured locality. But here we found our expectations of relief sadly frustrated, being assailed on all sides by a cloud of merciless mosquitoes, who could only be repelled by a great amount of exertion.

On the occasion of our first visit to the river, this was not our only mischance. The young women of the Berezovian Cossack families—very excellent creatures, but exceedingly eager after novelty, as our sex generally are—

seeing in what direction we were walking, being desirous either of making our acquaintance, or getting a good view of us, followed us in a body. Absolutely running along, they soon overtook us, and though we were perfect strangers to all, covered us with kisses. They were full of commiseration, too, for our solitude, and promised to do all in their power to amuse us during our stay amongst them, and in proof of the interest they took in us, overwhelmed us with questions on our affairs.

Having passed through the double ordeal of an attack from the mosquitoes and the young women, and being persuaded that to run the risk of such encounters in an open field would be anything but agreeable, we beat a retreat, determined to intrench ourselves within the walls of our own domicile, which we at length reached in safety.

Not until we saw ourselves within our own threshold, did we begin to breathe with freedom, rejoiced to escape both from the stings of the mosquitoes and the caresses of the Cossack women. We made a vow not to go out of doors until our winged assailants should have disappeared, when we might brave the fair

Cossacks. Even the enjoyment of fresh air, however desirable and necessary, could not compensate for the trouble we had had in battling with the formidable insects ; and glad we were to be again at rest.

But this day seemed to have been marked in black in the book of our horoscope. On looking round our rooms, where we had expected to find retirement and comfort, the sole consolation we could command, we were amazed to observe a scene of complete disarrangement and disorder.

Madame X—— had arrived from Tobolsk. We had happened, during our stay in that city, to become acquainted with her ; and on the score of that acquaintance, though our interview had scarcely lasted a couple of hours, she had now paid us an uninvited visit. Our surprise may be conceived, when, on opening the door of our apartments, we saw a stranger in a man's dressing-gown and boots, with cropped hair, surmounted by a jockey-cap, sitting on the sofa, smoking a pipe. At the same time, our reception-room, the best we had, was crammed with boxes, large and small, with rifles, yatagans, smoking-pipes, tobacco

bags, and other specimens of man's and woman's chattels blended confusedly together.

I was astounded at this spectacle, and at a loss to comprehend what could have happened. Madame X—— did not let me wait long for an explanation. She informed me that her mother and several sisters resided at Berezov, and she had come on a visit to them ; that on all such occasions when she arrived, she invariably used to lodge in our apartments ; and that, but shortly before she set out on her journey, she had sent word to our landlady, informing her of her intended visit. But although the rooms were occupied by us, she added, there was no reason why she should change her plan, being sure that there was room enough for her and for ourselves, and that it would be even more pleasant for both parties to lodge together.

I was confounded at the boldness, and still more at the *nonchalance* with which this proposition was made, and must confess that I quite lost my presence of mind. I was uncertain whether I should consider her as my guest, or as a fellow-lodger, not clearly comprehending, in fact, in which light she regarded herself.

But Madame X——, who had no idea of any such thing, and to whom all consideration appeared superfluous, only asked: "Which of the rooms are you going to give me?"

"If I am to judge by the language in which you have addressed us," I replied, "I suppose you mean to be considered as our guest; and as you have already made choice of the room, which appeared to be the most suitable to you, we, of course, must allow you, from the respect we bear to the laws of hospitality, to keep it. We place it, then, at your service."

This room being the largest of the three, all our efforts were directed to keep it in a tidy, and even ornamental condition; and hitherto it had served us both as a sitting-room and a reception-room. In an apartment beyond, which was smaller, and approached by a glass door, we slept; and a third, and still a smaller room, was appropriated as a store.

Flattering myself with the hope that Madame X——'s courtesy would not allow us to remain long in such a straitened dwelling, and that her stay would be of but short duration, I resolved to bear with her patiently. Meanwhile, how-

ever, we were doomed to part with our greatest comfort at Berezov—that of being alone in our domestic retreat. We had a room less, and a companion too many, besides Madame X——’s pet goose, her constant companion, from which she could never part, and which she was in the habit of caressing, as others do lap-dogs. It is true, the silly animal did not bark, but it made the house resound with its incessant cackling.

Madame X—— was a native of Siberia, a genuine Siberian breed, and distinguished by great originality. She dressed in man’s attire and fired the pistol, went hunting, and kept a collection of arms. She treated all the forms and usages of society with contempt, spurned them as shackles imposed on free-will, fetters on the mind ; and considered herself superior to the rest of her sex, in so far, as she differed from them by the boldness of her conduct, and the singularity of her dress and manners. She particularly relished the society of the exiles, and lived much with them. These, well knowing the peculiarities of her character, and being amused with them, instead of restraining her, as they ought, in her *bizarre* tastes and vagaries,

admired her independence of mind, her freedom from restraint, and her strange habits. From self-love and female vanity, she became as emancipated a woman as could well be imagined, and almost maddened her poor husband, who, in spite of her eccentricities, loved her desperately.

On the score of this very frame of mind, Madame X—— imagined she was best suited to be a natural companion and friend of ours. Her heart was not bad: of that we were assured; and she felt sympathy with our fate. But as she had never been a mother, and had not the least conception of what family ties are, she would hardly have guessed whence most of the sorrows of the heart sprang. Of all the evils which in our situation of exiles we had to suffer, she considered solitude to be the greatest and the only one. All ties which were torn asunder could, in her opinion, be replaced by others; and she was persuaded that, if she could only make us laugh or otherwise amuse us, she had done all to render our lives happy.

Such was her conviction, and she took credit for performing a noble act of humanity by becoming our constant companion, and intro-

ducing her acquaintances to us, unconscious how she was depriving us of our dearest possession ; and instead of making us thankful, as we otherwise should have been, for her good intentions, she caused us intolerable constraint and annoyance. We often wondered how long this state of things would last, and in what manner we should be extricated from the meshes she had woven around us. But this was a problem which we could not fathom !

CHAPTER XI.

Inland navigation—The Berezovian district—Population—Scantiness of cultivation—Manners and customs of the inhabitants—Berezovian women—Origin of the Berezovian Cossacks—Causes of their degeneration—Their military services and emoluments—Their mercantile spirit and traffic with the natives.

BETWEEN Berezov and Tobolsk, whatever direction the traveller may wish to take, the only highway is the river. During the summer, as I have formerly observed, communication is carried on by vessels, and in winter, when the river is frozen over, by sledges. In fact, rivers are considered to be the only practicable highroads in this country, those by land being obstructed by immense forests and intersected by numberless streams, torrents and ravines,

with no bridges, and at best but ill-constructed ferries, rendering a journey extremely wearisome and tedious.

About the middle of June, Madame Daubel arrived at Berezov, and brought with her a Polish maid-servant, whom Count Morchocki had been kind enough to procure for us. Such servants can easily be got at Tobolsk, from amongst the transported convicts, but it is difficult to get a good one. However, we resolved to give our Franciska a fair trial ; though her eyes had a very sly and sharp expression.

Berezov is the central point of the district of that name, a province so extensive that were it peopled in any proportion to its size it might be divided into several powerful nations. Some portions of the frontier are considered to be a distance of three thousand versts from Berezov. The district is bounded by the government of Yenisey in the east, that of Tobolsk in the south, by the Uralian Mountains and the government of Wologda in the west, and by the Arctic Ocean in the north. In the whole of this extensive territory, according to the last census, there are not more than fifteen thousand inhabitants. It is, however, not easy to vouch

for the accuracy of the census ; the tribes of the Ostiaks and the Samoiedes leading a nomade life, and therefore baffling all attempts at registration.

Even the country on the banks of the larger rivers, on which alone human settlements are found, presented to our sight a terrific wilderness. Throughout the district there is not the least trace of cultivation. At Berezov small patches of ground are planted with turnips, radishes, and some cabbages ; the latter, on account of the extreme shortness of the summer, growing only into leaves, and never attaining a heart. These cabbage-leaves are chopped small, as are also the leaves of turnips and radishes, and put together into casks, where they are kept until, from fermentation, they turn sour. From this preparation a dish is made called barshtch, which was not at all to my taste.

Potatoes I thought might, if introduced, grow well here, and be of great use to the inhabitants, though, owing to early frost they could never grow large. A few have been tried, but only to the extent of from ten to twenty potatoes, and these more as objects of curiosity than for use. Any one who should attempt planting

more, or possess a whole bed of the esculent, would appear, in the eyes of his neighbours, an extraordinary speculator.

On the whole, indeed, the Berezovians, as I could observe, did not favour this plant. Being accustomed to animal food, chiefly game, easy of digestion and easily obtained, no wonder that they eschew all such simple edibles, particularly as their cultivation requires much care and labour, and the fruit yields, after all, but little nourishment.

Madame X——, our fellow-lodger—for we were still at a loss whether to consider her in the character of a guest or a resident—seldom left us alone, though her mother, brothers, and several married sisters, resided in the town. However, she proved to be less troublesome than we had anticipated after an intrusion so unceremonious. She certainly talked a great deal too much, but she was quite indifferent as to whether we listened, nor was she offended when no answer was returned to her questions. Often, when intent on our work, we sat in profound silence, she continued her chattering, and was for hours the only speaker, and I may add, the only auditor. There were moments,

however, in which she caught our attention—for she possessed a vast deal of mother-wit—and we heard from her a number of amusing anecdotes of persons, whose characters she often admirably described. It is true that we were, to a great extent, losers by her inroad on our freedom and solitude, than which, in our situation, nothing could be more precious. If anything could compensate us for this restraint, the accounts she gave of the manners, characters, and opinions peculiar to the people, amongst whom fate had thrown us, certainly made up for it, as, but for her, we should have required many years to have become, in any degree, conversant with the ideas current in such a wild country, or to have understood the real condition of the inhabitants.

Nevertheless, Madame X——’s goose ceased not to be a great annoyance to me. It was a real plague in the house. No sooner did it awake from its sleep, which it commonly did between two and three o’clock in the morning, than it began its disagreeable cackling, rendering sleep on our part impossible. Nor could we bring ourselves to the custom of indemnifying ourselves for this loss of our night’s

rest, as Madame X—— was wont to do, by a nap after dinner.

Throughout Siberia the custom of the so-called siesta, in the afternoon, is as universal as sleep at night in European countries. In all houses the window-shutters are closed, and the people go regularly to bed for several hours. During this interval no visits are made, nor any business transacted.

At Tobolsk, at these siesta hours, the shops are shut throughout the town. Business and amusements are, as a consequence, protracted far into the night. Playing at cards is a favourite amusement, and commonly all leisure hours in Siberia are spent in gambling.

I had to thank Madame X—— for a few acquaintances. In my round of calls with her I found more beauties among the women than I anticipated ; and what surprised me most, was, that among them were many brunettes, with jet black eyes. Fair hair and light blue eyes are admitted to be the exceptional type of the Russian race ; and I am thus led to conclude that the dark complexion, both in men and women, denotes descent from the Cossacks of the Black Sea, who, accompanying Yermak, their chief,

on his excursion into Siberia, settled in the country, and remained a distinct race.

My conjecture seemed to tally with the account the Cossacks gave of themselves. One portion of them maintained that they sprang from the companions of Yermak, who, after his conquest of Siberia, had left them here as settlers. They principally consisted of volunteers from the Dnieper and the Don, and from Lithuania ; some actuated by the hope of improving their condition, and others by the love of adventure. Another portion of them asserted that they were, at a later period, added as auxiliaries to the former, by the celebrated merchants Strogonoffs, from their villages beyond the Ural, in order to keep the conquered country in subjection. The latter, as to their external appearance, evidently bear more affinity to the common Russian type, and in many characteristics much differ from the others.

The generality of the modern Cossacks of this place are a degenerated race, preserving none of the spirit, courage, and boldness of their valorous ancestors. The constant peace and security which they enjoy, has contributed to extinguish among this people all warlike and

even manly qualities. Becoming sluggards, they have merely turned merchants and barterers. They languish after their feather beds, and are ready to sacrifice everything for comfort. I saw young men of twenty years cry like babies, when they happened not to get their tea at the usual hour.

The Cossacks of Berezov, are subject to the laws common to the rest of the Cossacks in the Russian empire. Every male of that race is bound to serve in the army, from his seventeenth year to an advanced period of life. Even old age does not exempt any one from this servitude, unless his utter incapacity is attested by the proper authorities. The military duty, however, is usually not very burthensome, and rarely calls them far from home. Keeping sentry at a few government offices at Berezov, and service on the general staff of Tobolsk, which a few are obliged to perform annually, by rotation, comprise the whole routine. As a compensation, they are exempt from payment of taxes, and receive from the government a certain quantity of flour and barley for subsistence.

Of this class of Cossacks, some get promoted

to the rank of officers, which, according to the Russian law, confers nobility on the persons possessing it, though the distinction is in no case hereditary. A colonel's son, therefore, is nothing more than a common Cossack, and if ambitious of promotion, he is obliged to gain it by his own efforts. Formerly the Cossacks were at liberty to enter the civil service, but they do not now possess this privilege.

In their character of citizens, the Cossacks of Berezov might in many respects be classed with the Jews of my own country. They are traffickers, but not producers; their occupation is merely trading. Sometimes they go fishing, but never engage in woodcraft or hunting. The usual articles of commerce, as well as all the necessaries of life, with fish and game, can only be obtained from the Ostiaks. The common daily household business is likewise done by people hired from amidst that tribe.

The great fishing season commences in the month of June, and lasts till the latter end of August, thus occupying the whole summer. A number of vessels sail from Berezov, for the fisheries on the Oby Seas, taking away the whole of the well-to-do population, and most of the

poorer class. But even on their arrival at the fisheries, the Berezovians pass their time, not so much in fishing, but in the pursuit of traffic, according to their usual custom. Though their vessels are provided with nets and all the fishing appurtenances, they are for the most part manned by Ostiaks, and the fish they catch compose the least part of their cargoes; most of it, in fact, is obtained from the Ostiak and Samoiede fishermen. These nomade tribes, knowing the season at which the Russian fishing vessels arrive on the coast, come in their barges from all quarters, and barter their fish with the Russians for other commodities.

The Ostiaks are as yet unacquainted with the use of money. Skins of animals and fur are the customary circulating media, and all agreements in bargains and trade are referred to that standard. A white squirrel skin (*bielka*) represents the value of twenty assignat kopeks; an ermine, forty kopeks; a skin called piesak bialy (literally, white dog), three assignat rubles; and a like rate extends from the precious sables down to the commonest sorts of fur. In changing these commodities for Russian articles, the Ostiak never makes his agreement

for such or such a sum of money, but for so many of the above-named kinds of fur, every one of which has its fixed price.

The inhabitants of Berezov are, upon the whole, extremely well off, and even might be called wealthy. With regard to the first necessities of life, they need only stretch out their hand to have them, Providence having prepared for their use a plentiful supply, and on every side are forests full of game, and rivers full of fish. It is required only to cast a net, or to set a seine, to procure abundance of food for several days.

The river Oby abounds in excellent fish, including sturgeon, sterlet, salmon, pike, nuksuni, selga, nelma, mietusi and a variety of other species. The fish nelma and sterlet are more delicate than the sturgeon, and superior to it in flavour. The fish mietus is caught as large as a pound in weight, but they are inferior in delicacy. The selga is a small fish, but rich and delicious. The pike is least esteemed, and considered but poor eating. The Russians scarcely touch it, but throw it as food for dogs, foxes, and their Ostiak servants.

Various kinds of birds and wild fowl yield

also ample supplies of food. Those found in greatest abundance are wild geese, wild ducks, woodcocks, blackcocks, partridges, and waterfowl. There are also a variety of snipes, but though found in the swamps in great number, nobody cares to look for them, as, in the opinion of the inhabitants, they are too small to repay the trouble of shooting them, nor are they so easily reached as in hunting larger game.

Hares exist in great numbers, but nobody hunts them. The Russians have a religious aversion to eating them, as unclean ; and their skins are so cheap that they are considered not worth transporting to Tobolsk, the place where they are tanned. The Ostiaks, on the other hand, reject no sort of food, but eat whatever can be swallowed and digested. In this respect they are not a whit more fastidious than dogs. They eat foxes, crows, bears, and even their entrails ; all meat, fresh or tainted, and stinking fish. They eat their food both raw and boiled, but chiefly in a raw state.

The district of Berezov abounds in water. Apart from the stupendous river Oby, at a distance of about one verst from the town, there exist several other rivers, as the Waygulkka, the

Little and the Great Ostiatska, the Kazienna, the Horodynka and a number of minor streams not yet designated by any names. All these rivers fall into the Soswa, in the vicinity of the town, with the exception of the Horodynka, and each is large and deep enough to bear vessels of any size.

CHAPTER XII.

My child—Visits of guests—The Nizegorodtyow family
— Parental authority — Ladies' dresses — Costumes
peculiar to each class — Evils arising from change
of class.

THE 22nd of June is memorable to me as the birthday of my eldest daughter, Paulina. The first anniversary of this festival that I passed at Berezov, on awakening in the morning I fervently prayed to God for her; and whilst my thoughts and feelings were thus hovering over my beloved child, my heart was ready to burst, and scalding tears gushed from my eyes. But mournful as the subject was, I could not tear my soul away from reminiscences which, though so harrowing, were so dear.

Recalling to my mind the whole of my daughter's life, I in vain tried to explain to myself why my Paulina, brought up as she had been under the eyes of affectionate parents, and amidst a circle of relatives whom she tenderly loved, had far outstript the joyous age of youth, with all its buoyant freedom, and its playful gaiety, without in the least enjoying it ; though such incidents of the past, even at the most advanced age, are wont to recur fondly to our memories, ever shedding a glowing halo over our existence. Although she had scarcely completed ten years, yet she was, I might almost say, mature both in mind and heart. All her thoughts were grave, her sentiments fixed and deep, her judgment clear and penetrating, so that amidst the most perplexing circumstances she was never at a loss to discriminate at the first glance between truth and falsehood. Often have I had occasion to put her childish understanding to the test by consulting her on most delicate questions, and of a nature most intricate and difficult. I found her solve them all with a penetration and correctness I could not but admire. Hardly emerged from childhood, with a delicate frame of body, and placed amidst

most trying circumstances, God constituted her the sole guardian, with duties of a second mother, to a bereaved family. My Paulina, I am confident, did not shrink from or falter in this great calling ; she fulfilled it at her own great cost, but without even reckoning it a sacrifice. I cannot but think that God, having so prematurely marked her with the emblem of the cross, has thereby destined my child for that important mission which she had in our present trials to accomplish.

Full of such reflections, I gave them utterance in prayer, exclaiming : “ O, merciful God ! if Thou dost take into account the emotions of a mother’s heart ; if our sufferings, our sorrows, our tears, and our prayers are beheld with commiseration by Thee ; if innocence and sacrifices have a claim on Thy protection, vouchsafe to listen to the mother’s fervent supplication for the happiness of her child.”

Being so deeply moved, I avoided all company. At such a moment the presence of any one would have been most unwelcome, an unholy intrusion upon me.

Contrary to my usual custom, I laid long in bed, pretending to sleep. At last, hearing that

our fellow-lodger had dressed and gone out, I got up to follow my daily occupations.

I had intended to spend the whole 'day by myself, in complete seclusion, communing only with my thoughts and feelings. This purpose, however, was completely frustrated ; for, all my acquaintances at Berezov, as if they had mutually agreed upon an invasion, which perhaps was the case, came in the afternoon to visit me.

First of all appeared Madame Nizegorodtyow, the rich old dowager, whose house I have already described. She was the mother of five sons and five daughters, the latter of whom were all bestowed in marriage on the principal government officials of the place. This lady was soon followed by her daughters and sons-in-law, and by her sons and daughters-in-law, all heads of different and most respected families. It was quite a levee ; and I was obliged to exert myself to do the honours of the house.

Madame Nizegorodtyow was about fifty ; and when young she must have been very handsome. Even at this time she was very active, and in her conversation evinced a sound, clear judgment in everything. She was the acknow-

ledged head of her house, even in its mercantile transactions, in the management of which she was assisted by her sons. These young men were far from being emancipated from her control, though the property their father had left was estimated at one million rubles.

I always derived much pleasure from my intercourse with this old lady, for I found it unincumbered by any conventional forms, and her conversation was simple and sincere, and characterized by singular frankness.

In giving me one day the story of her life, she said that she was married at fifteen. When brought to her mother-in-law's house, she was subjected to a most severe noviciate, was obliged to obey her implicitly, and do the work of the humblest menial. Immediately after her wedding, her mother-in-law sent her, when the cold was 40° below the freezing-point, to the river to wash the linen ; and though at her own mother's house she had never been required to do any work, and was afraid that, in complying with such a demand, she might lose some of her limbs, she obeyed without a murmur and happily sustained no injury.

After such perfect obedience to her mother-

in-law, and after undergoing this severe discipline during several years, Madame Nizegorodtyow succeeded at last in gaining the old lady's favour; and, from her reasoning, I could perceive that she was firmly convinced that a patriarchal arbitrary power was the only effectual means for governing a family. Having been trained in that rigid way from her childhood, she had learnt not to abuse her power as her mother-in-law had done; but she knew how to impress all the members of her house with such a respect for her authority, that her daughters-in-law, though they belonged to wealthy families and were mothers of several children, used to show so much deference to her will, that on going out on their visits they would send messages to ask her what dress they should put on. But let it be understood that, in relating these particulars, I am far from wishing to represent them to the reader as facts of great weight, but merely as pictures of the degree of civilisation existing in this locality.

The whole toilette of my lady-visitors, considering this was such an out-of-the-world place, was uncommonly costly. Their dresses consisted of velvet and rich silk; and all the ornaments

worn were precious stones. Every one of the ladies, however, wore those peculiar to her respective class. The wives of the government *employés*, as belonging to the class of *blahorodny*, (nobles), wore caps on their heads ; while those of merchants, though the richest, had only silk handkerchiefs for their head-dress. These were of various colours, and were tied in a peculiar fashion on the head.

The inhabitants of Berezov are great sticklers for the distinctive marks of the different classes ; and what surprised me most was, that the inferior orders, as they are commonly termed, betrayed no desire, as in other parts, to infringe upon the privileged costumes belonging to the classes above them. On the contrary, they constituted themselves guardians of such distinctions, decrying any who attempted to transgress these arbitrary lines of demarkation.

Madame X—— set herself to oppose this feeling. The daughter of a merchant and a merchant's wife, she had, on the death of her husband, devoted all her energies to the accomplishment of female emancipation ; and on coming from Tobolsk to her family at Berezov, in order to render her appearance as striking

as possible, she had brought with her all sorts of caps and bonnets. A rumour of the commodities thus imported having got abroad, the citizens were excited to such a degree at the idea of any attempt at innovation, that they let her know immediately that should she dare to appear in public, dressed in her new apparel, she would be hooted; and that even at church the sanctity of the place should not screen her from their indignation; nor would they scruple to tear the odious gear from her head and trample it under foot. Having received this timely warning, Madame X—— deemed it more prudent to pack up her elegant caps and bonnets, and without giving them even one day's airing at Berezov, return them to her milliner at Tobolsk.

I highly approved of this strong attachment of the Berezovians to the station in which Providence had placed them. For my part, I find such attachment more consistent with the dignity of man; for in striving to exalt ourselves higher and higher, we do but betray contempt for the rank we are actually occupying, and acknowledge the one above us to be more respectable. For, how can it be otherwise than that the classes which are thus deemed to

be superior to our own, should despise us, as their inferiors, if we ourselves hold our position in such low estimation, and daily attest, by seeking to rise out of our own sphere, how much we admire and envy them?

I entertained my guests as well as I could, and Madame X—— was very useful on the occasion. Knowing the tastes of the company, she arranged two tables for the boston, and distributed packs of cards; and our guests seemed perfectly gratified. Those who were too young, or not clever enough to play boston, amused themselves at the kurka (hen), another game of cards, more easy and simple.

The inhabitants of Berezov, both men and women, are passionately fond of cards, and the custom is often very convenient; more especially when the company have nothing to talk about; a game at cards then well supplies the place of conversation.

CHAPTER XIII.

Failing health — A Siberian merchant — Attempts at agriculture — Hostility to improvement — System of trade — Articles of barter — Character of the natives — The culinary art — Young bride's first dinner-party — Female education — Facility of marriage — Landed property — Prospects of Berezov.

ONE fine morning in June, Madame X—— went out shooting, and brought home a snipe which she said she had herself killed. Her constant presence was by this time not so trying as at first, though still tiresome enough. Solitude might have proved a solace to me in the seclusion in which I was placed, yet I could not but reproach myself for grudging our visitor a corner of our chamber. My health began to fail; and as my feet swelled, I appre-

hended dropsy, a complaint which is hereditary in my family. Yet I thought placidly of my end, as, being far from my dear children, they would be spared the misery of witnessing my sufferings.

After dinner, Madame X——, recruited from the fatigue of her shooting excursion, proposed that we should call on Madame Nizegorodtyow.

Accordingly, we all three went, and met with a most cordial welcome. Various refreshments, including preserves, dry fruit, and cedar-nuts, were brought for us; followed by coffee and tea, with delicious home-made cakes, such as could only be had in the affluent house of the Nizegorodtyows. The old dowager's husband had been a great merchant, and, as far as I could judge, a very enterprising man, and a friend to improvement. He yearly made journeys to the famous fairs at Irbit and Nijni Novogorod; and there he had a good opportunity of becoming acquainted with all the advantages of modern industry and civilization. His object is said to have been to ameliorate the condition of his native town, and to effect such changes as seemed compatible with its climate.

Possessing abundant means, and what is more, a strong will, he attempted even to introduce agriculture, and for that purpose he procured the necessary implements, and brought, at his own expense, people conversant with the tillage of land to commence operations. Up to this time, a field in the neighbourhood of Berezov is shown, cleared of forest, where he used to sow his crops.

He was not a man to be at all discouraged by failures, which for the first few years were almost unavoidable ; but during some of the hotter summers he was enabled to rear crops, samples of which he found it worth while to send to St. Petersburg for the consideration of the government.* In the course of his useful

* This attempt to introduce agriculture at Berezov, 64° northern latitude, says a great deal for the enterprising spirit of the Berezovian merchant, although it completely failed. Owing to excessive cold, agriculture in Western Siberia ceases at 60° latitude ; the cold region embracing the territories between 67° and 57°. Within this circle, various shrubs bear berries, and garden vegetables are cultivated with success in the more southern parts ; but corn, which in Europe yields a not unprofitable harvest in 65° north latitude, cannot be cultivated with profit in Siberia farther north

enterprises, however, he experienced the greatest impediments from the inhabitants themselves, whom he found opposed to what they styled innovations ; so much so, that they deliberately destroyed his crops, and when, to prevent his field from being ruined, the worthy merchant caused it to be enclosed with a strong wooden fence, he had the mortification to see the fence reduced to ashes by the hand of an incendiary. I was quite at a loss how to account for such hostility to the introduction of improvement from which the inhabitants were to derive all the benefit, until our hostess informed me that

than 55°, and in Kamtschatka, than 51°. Below the latter degree, that is in the southern parts of Siberia, where the climate resembles that of Sweden and Northern Russia, corn yields a good harvest ; but even that part is too thinly inhabited to boast of any progress in agriculture as a science. The intensity of cold is not, however, by any means equal in the same latitudes throughout the whole continent, the severity of the climate increasing considerably with the extension of the territories eastward. This is an incontestable fact, but as yet the causes of the phenomenon have not been ascertained, and it is uncertain whether it be ascribable to a general law or to local circumstances.

a report got afloat, from the unaccountable ignorance of some person, that the success of agriculture would bring ruin on the people, and that they would all be turned into agricultural serfs, and forced to till the ground.

To what a degree agriculture, by care and perseverance, could be carried in such a locality as Berezov, it is difficult to say. The long illness and subsequent death of its first promoter had put an end to the whole project. Previous to his death, the active and enlightened merchant was afflicted with lunacy. His widow attributed this solely to the annoyances he had met with from a portion of the inhabitants. However this might be, we saw abundant evidence, wherever we turned our eyes, of Nizegorodtyow's appreciation of European industry and advancement. In his house especially, everything bore testimony to it. The structure itself was commodious, displaying architectural proportions, and a great degree of taste. All the furniture, plate, porcelain, and ornaments, were European; and what was still more extraordinary, there was a chimney-grate in the house, though it had been blocked up after the death of its master. There were also a billiard-table

a cabinet containing an organ, and a number of pictures, which all sufficiently proved a love for the elegancies as well as necessities of life.

Upon the whole, I observed there was no lack of the world's goods at Berezov, except among the Ostiaks, and no appearance of squalid poverty in the dwellings of the poorer class, as is too frequently the case amongst the lower orders elsewhere. In the houses even of the poorest, the table is furnished with good bread, fish, or meat; and on the days of festivals with meat puddings and fish. Their daily drink is tea, though of inferior quality, and they treat their guests with sweetmeats. Their linen is fine and white, not, as in other parts of Russia, striped and coloured. They regularly have two, if not more, new suits of clothes; one of good cloth, and one of fine stuff, lined with fur of fox or squirrel, and with sable collars.

The principal source of wealth of the Berezovians is derived from traffic in fur and fish with the Ostiaks. Any active and cunning speculator, with a capital of one hundred to two hundred assignat rubles at the first outset, is enabled in a few years to become a rich mer-

chant, the profits from the barter carried on with the Ostiaks being enormous.

The Ostiaks being totally ignorant of money, and still more of the rate of exchange, readily take in exchange for their own articles any commodities which they want, or which the Russian merchants can supply them with. The latter, however, are in the habit of fixing the value of their own articles at their own price, before they exchange them for those brought by the Ostiaks to market. According to the old customary standard, a *pud* (forty pounds English) of rye-flour used to represent the value of one skin of a white *piesak*,* and at that rate they are usually counted when exchanged against each other. But one pud of rye-flour at the market at Tobolsk does not cost more than fifty assignat kopeks, and frequently it can be had for half that sum. The cost of transport from Tobolsk down to Berezov is not more than fifteen assignat kopeks per pud, as a number of vessels are yearly dispatched empty from that

* The *piesak* is a rein-deer cub, under one year old. The skins are called *pieshki*, and are highly prized in the Russian fur market.

town to the fisheries on the Oby Sea, and their owners are always anxious to take on board any cargo, even at a most trifling rate. The whole expense for a pud of flour may thus be estimated at from thirty to seventy assignat kopeks; whereas a skin of a white piesak, which is bought for that same pud of flour from the Ostiak, is sold by the trader to a wholesale merchant of furs at Berezov, at the enormous price of three silver rubles.*

The wholesale fur merchants, of whom there are only three at Berezov, are in the habit of going with such furs to the fairs of Irbit or Nijni Novogorod, and after exchanging them there against articles of European manufactures, import the latter into Siberia for sale, or more properly barter.†

* One hundred kopeks (copper coin) make one silver ruble (about three shillings and sevenpence English). But the skins being bought, from the Ostiaks and other Siberian tribes, with assignat currency, in which one hundred kopeks are equivalent to about tenpence, or a French franc, the immense profit derived by the Russian fur dealers from such a barter becomes too obvious to need any further comment.

† Many other kinds of Siberian fur are exported to the same fairs, viz., squirrels, martin or sable, mink,

The articles in request by the Ostiaks and the Samoiedes, and with which the Russian traders supply them, are flour, knives, axes, iron nails, tobacco, various coloured glass beads, small plates of brass, or other shining metals for ornament, calicos, cloth, or the like stuffs in figured patterns, and of gaudy colour. On these commodities the Russian traders put what prices they like. Wherever they go, they are provided with a quantity of them, and they

chinchella, kolinski, ermine, beaver, wolf and bear skins ; and foxes, red, cross, silvery, black, white, grey. Part is disposed of for gentlemen's and ladies' wear in Russia, but a great quantity is exported to China, Persia, Turkey, Leipzig, and London. The trade, however, owing to the knavish practices of the Russian traders, has of late years much fallen off in the English market ; and the Russian fur is so much dearer than that which can be procured from the Hudson Bay Company in North America, that Russians themselves prefer to buy fur, if they can, at the London market. This is so much the case, that the superb Russian pelisse, of the skin of the Arctic fox, shown at the late Exhibition in London, which was so fine and soft, that it seemed more like down than fur, and the value of which was set at £3,600, might be had in London, as one of the principal fur merchants stated, for less than half the price, and of quite as good a quality.

are, in fact, equivalent to money elsewhere. Without such supplies, there would be an end to all trade in that part of the world.

The profits from this barter are so great as to be incalculable ; and they have the advantage of being certain, as there is no competition.

In order to secure success in trading with these nomade races, several things become indispensable ; namely, knowledge of their language, acquaintance with the usages and manners of the different tribes, with their periodical changes of residence, and, if possible, a personal acquaintance with the principal heads of their widely dispersed families. The entire commerce is founded solely on good faith. Each family of the nomade, whether Ostiak or Samoiede, is in the habit of dealing with only one merchant, and from him everything that is wanted, at all times, is taken on credit to the amount of so many skins. The good faith among these wild races is so great, and so deeply rooted, that a debtor will for no sum of money, however great, sell to another what he had once promised to his creditor. There may indeed occur cases in which on account of an unproductive season in

hunting, or the death of the debtor, or of his family, the creditor has not been paid, or the payment postponed to the ensuing year ; but, as long as any member of the family survives, and can take part in hunting and fishing, the creditor may be certain that at some period or other his debt will be faithfully discharged.

Another cause of the prosperity of the Berezovians is the simplicity of their manners ; and in this respect they seem to have solved more wisely than ourselves the question of social welfare. How often are our comforts our ease, and tranquillity sacrificed to vanity, to prejudice, and to fashion ? How many superfluous servants do we pay, not for convenience, but merely to keep our houses on a grand scale, corresponding to the station we believe ourselves to occupy in society, or the position in which we wish our neighbours to see us. Far from ministering to our comforts, this multitude of menials is the cause of the greatest discomfort and trouble to us. From sheer idleness, they are disposed to all sorts of mischief ; and to keep them in any kind of order and subordination, we are compelled to augment, at a great expense,

the number of overseers over them ; and these, again, diminish our income, and frequently prove a new source of annoyance.

These and the like expenses, owing to a much wiser appreciation of social comfort, are unknown at Berezov. The inhabitants are their own servants. No mistress of the house, be she ever so rich, or however high in rank, is ever ashamed of attending to the kitchen and to the management of her household ; and is content, if, according to the extent of her house, she has one or two servants to aid her in the performance of her household duties. The culinary art constitutes the principal branch of education among the fair sex ; and far from blushing when detected in this employment, they pride themselves on their proficiency in it as the highest of female accomplishments.

I am far from wishing to offend any of my sex by these remarks. We are all ready to concede precedence to acquirements which attract by their agreeableness ; but I beg to be permitted to say a few words in defence of those among us who are cooks. There is something in good motives by which the meanest art may be ennobled. Where is the thrifty housewife, and

where the mother, who in preparing dainty and wholesome dishes for the table, thinks only of her own enjoyment? Is not the enjoyment, on the contrary, designed for her husband, for her children, or for the friends who happen to be partakers of it? And to achieve such results is the most gratifying reward she can receive.

Looking therefore on the kitchen as a very important department of domestic life, the Berezovians have associated its mysteries with the most momentous epoch of woman's life—her early education.

It is a received custom that every young bride, on arriving at her husband's house, must invite guests to a dinner prepared by her own hands, and this repast is considered a test of the education she has received at her parents' house. Shame and disgrace are the consequence, should she be found deficient on such an occasion; and shame also to the parents who did not attend to that essential branch of her education. Whereas, her success in gratifying her guests is taken as a proof, not only of the young woman's own excellence, but also as no small recommendation of her whole family, among whom she

must have had so good an example and received such excellent instruction.

Livery servants richly clad, and carriages or grooms, are not known at Berezov. Their absence, far from being a drawback on the pleasures of life, contributes to enhance them, and by not impoverishing families, enables them to live in affluence and ease.

How many families may be found in our own country, which, had they but the courage to curtail their unnecessary expenditure—which, while keeping up a specious state and splendour, proves ruinous to their fortunes, without in the least ministering to comfort—would soon discover a new source of gratification of which they can now form no idea? Looking at the subject through the glasses of prejudice and habitual conventionalities, our sex would at first, indeed, be but little satisfied at the prospect of such an order of things. They would consider themselves degraded by performing any household services, while in reality they would be gainers by the change. All we need is to get from our early childhood accustomed to domestic occupations, and at the same time have our fancies freed from the impression that such drudgeries

were beneath us; there is no doubt that the duties which now appear so irksome, and even repulsive, would then prove quite the reverse, becoming, as they ultimately would, the source of a more lively interest to ourselves, than all the hankering after artificial amusements, of which the programme of a young lady's early education is chiefly made up.

But this laudable custom produces another most salutary effect on the whole course of a woman's life. Men, in these parts, are not averse to matrimony, and women being generally esteemed, are much sought in marriage; as men are convinced that on taking a wife, she will really render herself useful, and that the management of the house and all domestic comforts will be cared for by her. The service of a hireling, such as would render a bachelor's life less irksome, cannot at all be obtained here; and the consequence is that, though daughters even of the richest parents do not bring their husbands any fortunes unless there is no male issue, an old maid is quite a rarity: at least, I never met one, with the exception of the infirm and the deformed. With the Berezovians, females are invaluable, and it is they who make their

choice of a husband, instead, as with us, of the husband choosing the wife.

I have seen instances of poor girls, daughters of parents of the humblest class, refusing government functionaries of the higher class, when the man was found to be stained by vices; and this was considered so natural that nobody wondered at it. With us, on the contrary, no sooner is a position in society offered, than a young, beautiful, and lovely female is thrust into the arms of a reprobate, be he ever so corrupt and brutalized; and very often by a compact secretly formed between the parents themselves, under the plausible, but wicked plea, that they are promoting her happiness.

Apart from this, there is still another circumstance materially contributing to the well-being of the inhabitants of this part of the world, namely, that they are not desirous of acquiring any landed property; there being, in fact, no opportunity for the acquisition of such possession. In our country, on the contrary, every active and thrifty man, as soon as he has succeeded by his industry and good management in acquiring some capital, regularly lays it out in the purchase of land, to insure, as the phrase

goes, a competence for his children, which means a livelihood without the necessity of labour. By that plan, the worthy man is in the first instance losing at least one half of his life amid toil and anxieties before he is enabled to acquire such a property, while he commonly loses the other half in improving it; and thus dies without having derived any advantage for himself; and what is worse, leaves to his successors the means of living in idleness. Nothing of the kind is done in this locality, where the earth is considered the common property of all: and every one possessing some amount of capital turns it as often as he can in trade, at the same time enjoying all the advantages and comforts which his accumulating income can procure.

Even avarice, a vice innate in some nations, has here less scope than in other places. Commerce, as I have stated, is indeed followed by all; but the amount of capital requisite is necessarily apportioned to the exceedingly small population. The only sources of wealth vouchsafed by Providence to the inhabitants, are fish and the skins of animals, and these articles are yearly disposed of at the fairs of Irbit or of Makariev; but whatever amount of money

merchants may realise for them, they cannot import more European manufactures than is absolutely required for the consumption of the population. Consequently, the surplus of their capital cannot be employed for anything else than the comforts of life; or, if anything be spared, it is laid out in the purchase of costly furniture, and expensive dresses or ornaments. All the comforts the inhabitants of Berezov enjoy, all their well-being, and even a degree of luxury and splendour which I saw in their houses, were solely owing to their exertions in commerce. Finally, I may add that the very facility with which competence can be obtained by industry, relieves the parents from any anxieties about the future lot of their children. Daughters, though without rich dowries, are sure of being married, and their husbands secure them subsistence; while sons need only moderately exert themselves to obtain affluence.

As for the education of children, which in general entails so much expense in other countries, and which, even when finished, fails to answer any purpose, and in most cases continues to lie a dead capital without being available in practical life, it does not in the least trouble

parents at Berezov. They can scarcely conceive what use there can be in filling the heads of children with so much learning, which they cannot turn to any account, and most of which they soon forget. They send their children to school, merely that they may learn to read and write, and so be competent to keep accounts with the Ostiaks. In acquiring this instruction, they put their parents to no expense, as it is imparted gratuitously at the Government School. By some even this degree of learning is deemed superfluous, as sums can be cast up just as well mechanically on their *shtchoby*; and many therefore exempt their children from attending school. The rest of the education of the boys is practical; each accompanying his father in his business expeditions, and sharing his labour, as soon as his age enables him to engage in trade.

As for girls, they learn from their mothers housekeeping, regularity, cleanliness, and cookery. If any one should combine with these attainments, proficiency of reading and of writing, it would be considered a great accomplishment, though it can be acquired by all young girls at the cheapest rate imaginable.

The inhabitants of Berezov have not yet any exact notion of what is called a fixed fee or salary, payable for personal services. If any female is found in the place proficient enough in reading, and she happens to be disengaged from other occupations at home, the mothers agree among each other to send their daughters to her for instruction. Stipulation for any remuneration by the teacher forms no part of the transaction; but the mothers of the pupils, to evince their gratitude to her, are in the habit on the days of festivals, and on her own name's-day, of sending her presents, which, however, would, even in the course of the year, hardly amount in value to a few rubles. Eventually, however, a permanent friendship is established between all the parties for mutual kindnesses and obligations, by which the instructress is never a loser.

Amidst such primitive manners, the life of the Berezovians passes on easily and agreeably, without any great anxieties for the future, and without heavy labour, but at the same time not in idleness. And in that blissful state they probably will continue, until the introduction of foreign manners shall have awakened around

them imaginary wants. Then, perhaps, they will, when too late, sigh after what is termed among us the golden age of the past.

At Berezov different classes are not separated from each other by insurmountable barriers. The Government employés live on a footing of perfect equality with merchants, citizens, and even Cossacks. They intermarry, and associate with all. Wealth alone constitutes some distinct sections; the families of the rich naturally preferring to associate with those who are rich; while the poorer, on the other hand, seek the society of their equals in condition. As regards marriages, no distinction of class is observed; and sons of the richest parents take wives, if it pleases them, from the daughters of the poorest. The whole population is in a most prosperous condition, and in consequence the town of Berezov is every year increasing in new buildings. Improvements and domestic comforts are keeping pace with the augmentation of wealth and means. Immense forests furnish abundance of materials for the construction of edifices. In lime, mortar, and masons they are deficient, but these are supplied from Tobolsk.

CHAPTER XIV.

St. Peter's festival—Waygulka pic-nics—Sudden cold—
Traces of a road — Government magazines — An
Ostiak encampment—Description of an Ostiak yourta
—Smell peculiar to the Ostiaks—Their diet—Ostiak
beggars.

THE 29th of June was a great festival, the day of St. Peter, and the end of a fast of many weeks. For the first time since our arrival, we saw meat on our table. There is no slaughter-house in the whole town ; but prior to each great festival some of the richer citizens kill an ox in their house, and distribute the meat among their friends and neighbours. At other festivals the latter do the same, and then the compliment is returned. The festive fare of this day commenced with poultry, pie, and a dish of minced beef ; such dishes being always symbolical of a grand *fête*.

The weather having been cold, with heavy rain, and Josephine being indisposed, I stayed the whole day in doors. The public, however, nothing daunted by the inclemency of the weather, carried on their festivities according to usual and immemorial custom.

On St. Peter's day it is customary for the Berezovians to make an excursion on the banks of the river Waygulka, and there to assemble on an extensive meadow in front of the government magazines. Parties of gaily attired men, women, and children, press forward from town in this direction, and on arriving at the spot, congregate in merry circles and in different groups. Eatables and dainties are brought from home by thrifty housewives, and the exercise of mutual civilities and hospitalities on the occasion becomes universal. The poorer classes regale themselves with scantier fare of cedar nuts. The meadow is the only public promenade in the environs, and is visited only once in the year. In general the Berezovians are not fond of promenades; the mosquitoes, as I believe, destroying all enjoyment. The good people, too, prefer boating to land excursions.

The cold was so piercing on this day, that I

was obliged to put on warmer clothing. It gradually grew more intense, blowing from the Frozen Ocean, and continuing in this quarter for several days. Mosquitoes disappeared; and the earth, which had been soaked with rain, again became dry. Still I resolved to take a walk in order to see something of the neighbourhood. Josephine and Madame X—— offered to accompany me, and we sallied forth. This time no mosquitoes annoyed us; but the atmosphere was full of innumerable small gnats and flies, more venomous even than mosquitoes. They flew straight into one's eyes, ears, and mouth, and their bites produced a painful swelling. Josephine could not bear them, and soon returned home; but I could not prevail on Madame X—— to do the same. She remained with me and was bent on the walk; and as she enjoyed no walk when alone, for her sake I was obliged to keep her company in the dirty and muddy streets, leaping from plank to plank, from stem to stem, the wooden substitutes here for a pavement.

Having made the round of the principal streets and places, and happening to pass by the house of Madame X——'s sister, my companion stepped in and remained there, leaving me at

liberty to dispose of myself as I liked. I took advantage of this moment of freedom, and with hurried steps left the town and entered the adjacent forest. Here, after a short walk I found, to my great astonishment, a narrow road with traces of wheels, and this was the first road I had seen since I left Tobolsk. The sight, insignificant as under other circumstances it might have seemed, was to me one of the most endearing ones that I remember. Wonderful is the power of associations, but only they whom the force of circumstances has thrown into a distant and strange country, and who remember the impression they received when seeing a national costume or national colours, or when hearing strains of a song once familiar to them in their native land, can form a conception of what I at that moment felt. Thoughts of home and all its endearments rushed upon my memory: the past started up, as in a mirror, before my mind, and my heart clung fast to its shadow. Without a moment's reflection I followed the course of the narrow road as though clasping the hand of a dear and long unseen friend. But alas! the illusion soon vanished, and the road terminated in front of the government magazines. Grievously disappointed, I

remained fixed on the spot, with feelings like those experienced by a child running after a bubble which bursts before her eyes.

I determined, nevertheless, to continue my walk; but this time diverging from my previous route, I proceeded along the banks of the river Waygulka. Before, however, I had proceeded very far, I came upon several Ostiak families, who had recently arrived at the place, and formed a summer encampment. Women and children were sitting at a large, blazing fire, baking their bread of rye-flour—a sort of kettle-bread, such as is sometimes baked with us—in the ashes.* The men, I found, had embarked on board the merchant vessels at Berezov, and gone to fish in the Oby gulf. Their families had settled but temporarily here, to be near the town, whence they could more easily procure provisions for their subsistence.

Small huts constructed of the bark of the birch, not unlike the booths of our wandering

* The Polish term for it is *wychopieniek*, from the bread being baked quickly, or as it were caught out of the ashes. The bread so baked is by no means bad; it has a peculiar, and even superior flavour to that obtained by the usual baking process.

gipsies, but without either doors or windows, are the summer dwellings of the Ostiaks. They are watched by dogs, their only guardians and protectors. Nor do they need even this protection, unless, perhaps, to repel the attack of a bear. No article of their property would tempt anybody in the world. Accustomed as we are, to heaps of furniture, and considering each of the articles indispensable, we can hardly conceive how little is here needed by man. A bucket, made of the bark of the birch, for carrying water, a basin formed of the same rude material, a few wooden spoons, and some skins of the rein-deer, are all that is required to supply the wants of an Ostiak family.

I did not tarry long on the river side. I was panting for a more extended view of nature and longed for solitude. I turned to the right, and entered the forest, to examine the trees and plants. They were all different from ours, insomuch that it seemed as though I had died in one world and was now born anew in another. Everything around me was new and changed; nature, mankind, objects, usages, ideas; all presented an altered aspect. Had it

not been for the feelings still burning deep in my bosom; had it not been for the mirror of memory reflecting the past with colours as vivid as ever; what could have borne testimony to my existence?

Here a question suggested itself to my mind. Whether the faculty, with which man is endowed, of preserving the memory of past impressions in the recesses of his soul, be a benefit to him or the contrary? But as soon as the question arose, that very moment I suppressed it, as something blasphemous, with which I feared to taint my thoughts. The past, if at all dead, becomes, by means of our memory, so rivetted to the soul as to be one with it, and is incapable of being torn from it. God, in his inscrutable wisdom, is leading his creatures to ends known only to Himself, and often on such paths as they would of themselves shrink from. Nevertheless, the results of this guidance prove in the end beneficial to us. Weak and blind as we are, let us submit and rely on Him.

I wandered for some time alone in the forest; but was afraid to penetrate too far into it, lest I should lose my way. I came within sight of

an Ostiak yourta, much larger and more extensive than any I had seen before. The door stood ajar, as though inviting my notice, and I entered. The hut was constructed of large trunks of wood, half sunk in the earth and without windows. The roof was likewise covered with logs of wood, heaped with earth. In the middle of the roof was an opening for emitting smoke, and at the same time serving, in conjunction with the door, to admit the light of day. In one of the corners was a fire-place, and a fire was continually kept up for the double purpose of cooking and keeping off mosquitoes. Over the fire, which was blazing fiercely, hung an iron kettle, with fish boiling in water sprinkled with rye-flour, the customary dish of the Ostiaks, and which is called *burdiuk*. They eat it without the addition of either salt or bread.

At the furthest side, by the wall, lay logs of wood, cut equally, and arranged regularly in the shape of sofas or benches. This rough furniture was covered with rein-deer skins, and evidently served as seats and couches for the residents. Near the wall on the right stood a capacious chest, protected all over with a cover-

ing of tin, and beside it two coffers of similar shapes, but smaller in size, containing probably all the wealth of the master of the house. With the exception of these articles, the domestic utensils were nearly the same as those described in the yourta of the poorer Ostiaks. In a corner stood a bucket made of the bark of the birch, a wooden basin, spoons, ladles, and some plates and tubs, likewise of wood. I found in the yourta a man and a girl ten years old, both in a nude state. The man perceiving a stranger coming in, drew over his shoulders, as quickly as he could, his *malca* ;* but the girl made not the slightest attempt to arrange her toilet. I could take but a hasty survey of the interior of the miserable hut, as the intolerable and suffocating stench made me soon retreat into the open air. The Ostiaks smell atrociously, and this with a smell peculiar to them. After staying in a house for awhile, the rank effluvium an Ostiak leaves behind, despite airing and fumigation, is sure to remain for a whole day. His dress of rein-deer skins, prepared by a certain process with the fat of the fish, which

* The *malca* is a shirt of rein-deer skin, worn by the Ostiaks inside out.

even in its freshest state is very unpleasant, together with his rancid food and the constant smoke in which he is enveloped day and night, form such a combination of odours as is sufficient to infect the whole atmosphere around him.

The abominations which he employed as his food surpass all description. Not to mention raw fish, which is considered a great dainty by all the people of that region, they eat raw meat, the blood and the entrails of any animal, whether alive or dead, and fish in a putrid state. They devour also foxes, crows, magpies and squirrels.

The Ostiak settlers in the vicinity of Berezov, when pressed by hunger, come into the town with a *lukosnek** in their hand, or with a kettle hanging on a stick from their shoulders, and beg at the houses of the Russians. The women of Berezov, from whose threshold a poor person is never sent away without relief, but by whom the Ostiaks are regarded as the lowest order of mankind, give them scraps remaining from yesterday's meal, mouldy bits of bread, handfuls

* The *lukosnek* is a kind of wicker hamper, or basket, made of the bark of the birch.

of flour, entrails of animals and all sorts of offal, with dish-water or water in which ducks and fish have been washed, and all these disgusting things are equally acceptable to the hungry Ostiak. After he has collected a sufficient budget, he commonly takes his seat in the street, and within sight of the public greedily devours the mess. I have sometimes happened to pass rather close to some of these poor creatures, and the smell of the feast has been perfectly poisonous. My only resource was to stop my nose with my hand, and run away as fast as I could.

Here I cannot help saying, that the Bere-zovians in general, of Russian extraction, and even the richest not excepted, are by no means fastidious in reference to smell, as if suffering under a complete obtuseness of the olfactory organ; for however careful they may be in keeping their dwellings, and especially their upper apartments, airy and clean, they do not extend the same care to their kitchens. They are not particular in clearing the meal of yesterday from the saucepans and other cooking utensils, but put in fresh meat on the remains, and so they go on from day to day; and if

remonstrated with on this point, they say only that it is just the same, and quite as clean. Nor do they evince any aversion to eating the rankest dishes, such as have become quite unbearable by their corruption and smell, and call them only *kwasnoy* (sour).

CHAPTER XV.

Terrific storm—Thoughts of home—A Siberian soirée—
Sumptuous supper—The stirrup cup.

AMONG such people, and in this solitary place, I watched eagerly for some intelligence from my loved and distant home, but post after post arrived, and brought me only disappointment. Was it that no echo could reach me any more from the world of my soul? Perhaps those whom I so tenderly loved, did not even know in what part of the world I existed. Perhaps they know not whither to waft to me their regrets and sighs. I let no post quit without writing to them, but could not be certain whether a single word of mine would ever reach their hands. But to wait

and to hope were not without a solace amid the agony of my longings.

As July opened, the air again grew very sultry. And what deluges of rain came down ! Never in any country have I seen such tremendous torrents. The rain poured down like a water-spout, and without intermission. The lightning and thunder were terrific, and the deep resounding explosions inspired an intense feeling of awe. But here all is extreme : extreme heat and extreme cold ; extreme darkness, and extremes of light ; and so even rain and thunder and lightning. While the storms raged, the whole family of our host assembled in our drawing-room, because in it were the images of their household saints. Before these they ranged lighted tapers, and addressed the saints with bows and supplications. Our host's daughter, a young girl of fourteen, read the Gospel ; the aged father communed in his mind, and prayed in silence ; his wife from time to time looked through the window to see whether the neighbouring edifices were not blazing in fire. Her face was impressed with solicitude, not unmixed with apprehension ; and at every clap of thunder, the heads of

all were bowed down to the ground. It was evident that they trembled for the life which was dear to them; and as fearing to lose what they most prized. Alas! why did this feeling not agitate me? At these awful moments, I could only feel that if the sun and the stars were to be wrenched from their places, and the whole wonderful firmament dislocated, it would scarcely rouse me from my apathy and torpor. Could even this revolution of the whole of nature in any way affect me? Did the world in which I still existed belong to me? or had I anything to do with it? No, save the soothing hope of, perhaps, pressing my dear children once more to my breast, save that sole, fondly cherished hope, which it pleased God in His great mercy to infuse into my heart, I had nothing to live for.

Oh! could I have been but certain that my soul, when emancipated from the bonds of this body, would soar on its well-known track to those who are so dear; could I but be sure that it would share in common with them the same emotions, reveal itself by the same aspirations, ward off from them all dangers, fortify them in the struggles of life,

or comfort them in adversity—the prospect of death would have been indeed welcome to me. It would then have proved but a guiding star to Hope, now alone illumining with her soft light the dark path of my cheerless existence. O Heavenly Father ! pardon thy child's thought, and be it far from any intent of offending thy divine majesty.

The thunders gradually hushed ; lightning no longer rent the heavens ; the black clouds were swept away, although they still hung darkly over the lower part of the horizon ; and distant thunders, rolling deep, still awakened dread, but grew fainter and fainter with every clap. Taking advantage of the first moments after the tremendous rain had ceased, I went out for a walk. Water was running from the hills in torrents and streamed down from the roofs of houses in thick crystal ropes ; while trees and plants drooped their heads under the big drops, as if beneath a weight of tears. Leaping from stem to stem, and from one plank on to another, I traversed the town and some of its environs ; and, after gratifying my curiosity, returned home wet through.

We received an invitation from the director

of the police (Sprawnik), to an evening party at his house, on the occasion, as we afterwards learned, of his wife's name's day. We had to thank Madame X——, who was our mentor here, that we did not commit a breach of etiquette in the matter. Our invitation came early in the morning, which we thought strange; but she informed us, that the first note of invitation meant nothing, but was merely intended as an announcement, to enable the guest to be prepared for the occasion. Between six and seven o'clock another messenger arrived, called the "Zazywatz," or reminder; and he delivered us another more formal invitation. We went at ten o'clock, and found a numerous company. The male portion amused themselves in the first suite of rooms, by playing boston, or partaking of refreshments; the ladies sat in the drawing-room, richly attired in dresses of most expensive stuffs, decorated with gold chains, necklaces, and brooches of precious stones and Oriental pearls. The only difference observable was in their head-dresses, by which the wives of the functionaries or nobles (blahorody) could be distinguished from those of the citizens. The first wore caps, the latter coloured silk

kerchiefs, tied in a manner to make the head appear in the shape of a melon. But even the head-gear was beginning, I could observe, to lose its original simplicity, as the ends of the kerchiefs tied on the top of the head, were trimmed with blond, and adjusted with pins of precious stones by way of supporting their weight; but which, evidently, were but pretensions on the part of some of the young women, to assimilate their head-dresses as near as possible to those worn by the ladies of the noble class. The maidens occupied seats in the most conspicuous part of the drawing-room, under the images of the Saints. This is considered a place of honour, and is never forgotten by the hostess; and the highest person in rank, or whom she wishes to honour most in her house, is always led to it.

Here I was struck with a custom which is quite at variance with our own manners. At Berezov, unmarried women, even the youngest girls, have the first honours paid them at parties. To them tea, cakes, and sweetmeats are offered first, and they are first presented to the rest of the company, and have the highest seats assigned to them. It is rather odd to see a girl not yet

in her teens taking precedence of elderly mothers, and quite confident that it belongs to her as a right.

Before a sofa stood a table covered with all sorts of confectionary, preserves, dried fruit, and cedar nuts, and every now and then the hostess went round to present some of these to the ladies. Each of the new-comers on her entrance had, by way of welcome, a plate of sweetmeats presented to her ; and it was regularly from her that the new round commenced. Gentlemen seemed to take no delight in these delicacies, but made up for their abstinence in this respect by partaking of the wine and liquors.

When we arrived, it appeared that nearly all the guests were assembled, for the servants commenced carrying round coffee, and afterwards tea. Coffee is not used at Berezov except on extraordinary occasions, and the inhabitants scarcely know how to prepare it. Usually it is boiled on the preceding day, and left through the night to clear ; then it is poured into the coffee urn, and boiled again. When handed round, the cups are filled to the very brim, and it is customary to pour in a little raw cold cream, as we are wont to do with tea.

Though the coffee was but indifferent, the cakes were extremely good, and indeed the Berezovian women excel in their pastry. They are celebrated for their sweet biscuits, crumpets, muffins, waffle, almond cakes, and a variety of French confectionary. They present these dainties, however, only to ladies ; gentlemen are excluded from partaking of them, as well as the other sweetmeats, and are restricted to the drinking part of the entertainment.

Through the manœuvring of Madame X——, a boston table was made up, and another portion of the company sat down to the easier game of hen. They who disdained to take part either in the one game or the other, amused themselves with cracking cedar nuts.

The Berezovian women take no pleasure in conversation. The whole stock of their conversational powers is limited to a few formal interrogations about the health of the members of their families, on which occasion every one of the members must be specified by both his Christian and surname. With these simple inquiries their conversation terminates. The answer is equally simple and brief, namely,

“Slawa Bohu,” (Glory be to God), and thus the formality is ended.

At midnight we wished to take leave ; but our amiable hostess would not hear of it. She would not let us go before supper, and gave orders that it should be instantly served. At about two o'clock the supper came, and consisted of an immense variety of dishes, amounting without exaggeration, to full a hundred. And as every *fête* at Berezov offers opportunities for a similar display of eatables, I will, to gratify the curiosity of gourmands, give a description of at least some of them.

Every grand feast commences with a pirog, a raised cake, usually with a French crust. On the occasion of name's-day festivals, this figures on the table as one of the standing dishes. No grand *fête* takes place without it. The whole supper is *à la fourchette*. Everybody takes what he likes best, and eats where and with whom he pleases.

Due honour being done to the pirog, the first entry came in, and the whole table was entirely covered with it. It would be no small task to enumerate the variety of dishes,

There were ducks, smoked and fresh—geese fresh and pickled, and stuffed with various ingredients, and set round with jellies; tongues of oxen and rein-deer, prepared in a peculiar manner; heads and heels of the same animals, and coloured jellies, ornamented on the top with a variety of neat, shining embellishments, and proudly reposing on layers of lemon peel, geranium leaves, and flowers. Little satisfied with the provisions which the place could afford, the lady in whose honour the day was celebrated, had procured supplies from distant parts of the country; and among these figured a splendid ham, and a roast pig, cold, both imported from Tobolsk.

The first *entrée* having been removed, the second was served. This was not so abundant as the first, and consisted chiefly of cutlets and game, with but one sweet, in which the taste of onion and palm predominated. As for sauces, this part of the culinary art might be declared to be still in its infancy at Berezov.

The third *entrée* was made up wholly of roast meat, and it would be difficult to describe all the dishes, so great was their variety. Every

kind of game that the woods and forest contained, was brought on the table, and it almost groaned beneath the heap of geese, ducks, woodcocks, partridges, and various species of snipes. Amidst this grand array, roast veal occupied the place of honour.

Subsequently to this course, rice pudding was ushered in, with a white sauce poured over it. This is the only one of our puddings known to the Berezovians, and at no entertainment is it forgotten.

These principal courses were succeeded by sweet jellies, clear and transparent, and ornamentally served up. They would have been unexceptionally good, only for the quantity of wine and spices in them, which rendered them rather too pungent for the palate. At last several sorts of cakes were brought in, and with these the *fête* ended.

In looking on such a quantity of food, I could not but murmur to myself, "c'est une mer à boire." It seemed impossible that so much could be at once consumed by a company of forty or fifty persons; but to my great astonishment, I observed that the dishes, which appeared first at the ladies' table, being after-


wards handed to that of the gentlemen, all returned empty.

After the last course, the lady of the house entered the room, carrying a tray, with a bottle and glasses, such as are used for champagne. She went round to every one of the guests, beginning with the ladies, and requested them to drink a glass. This could not, of course, be declined, as it was drunk to the health of the hostess.

Even the ladies were obliged, more or less, to drink. The liquor was a home-made wine, which every lady at Berezov knows how to prepare. It was of a red colour, effervescent, and frothy, very much like champagne mousseux. It can be made of raspberries or of currants, with the addition of sugar and French brandy; and is sweet and agreeable to the taste. It goes by the name of *apogare*.

This was the stirrup-cup, the watchword to depart. After drinking it, every one expressed his thanks to the hostess for her hospitality, and without a moment's delay left the house.

On going out all at once, we formed quite a crowd in the street, but as we proceeded, we gradually diminished in number, the company,



dispersing in different directions. All accelerated their steps homewards, and though highly delighted at the entertainment, everybody, including the most vivacious, seemed to be thoroughly wearied, and at so late an hour to long for rest.

CHAPTER XVI.

Marriage ceremony—Death of Colonel Krzyzanowski—
News from home — Paulina's letter — Impressions
during a walk.

ONE morning we had a plateful of *kniazniki* (princelings), considered a great treat at that period of the season. They are a kind of berry, peculiar to this place, and quite unknown in our country. They grow on a high, hard stalk like raspberries, but nearer the ground. When blooming, their blossom is of the colour of a rose. Indeed, they resemble raspberries both in colour and shape, only that they are browner and less succulent. Their juice, though somewhat pungent, is by no means disagreeable. They have a sweet, pine-apple scent, and make most delicious preserves. The woods near Berezov teem with these berries; but though

plentiful, they cannot be easily got, as nobody is willing, for the sake of a few kopeks, to expose himself to the necessity of a fierce fight with the mosquitoes.

There is another berry, called the *morozka*, in shape not unlike our wild mulberry, and growing, like the *kniazniki*, on a stalk, though it is a much higher one. This berry is of an orange colour, deepening into red on the side exposed to the sun. It is much harder and less juicy than the *kniazniki*, and on that account is less esteemed.

A few raspberries may also be found here; but being rather rare, the people think it not worth troubling to seek them. They attach more value to the currants, though they are exceedingly sour, and their kernel hard and large. But in a place like this, where neither vegetables nor fruit can grow, every berry, be it ever so poor, is made a great deal of.

Hearing that a wedding was to take place in the town, we were curious to witness the ceremony; and seizing time by the forelock, went early to church, to be there before the young bride arrived. It is customary here to go to church on foot, but on the present

occasion the bride departed from the time-honoured fashion, and went in a telega—a common Russian cart—adorned, however, with a rich carpet, which was spread over it, yet the whole aspect of the vehicle presented the appearance of a funeral bier, rather than the car of the God of Hymen.

The bridegroom, whom we found waiting in the church, went to meet his betrothed at the door, where they repeatedly kissed one another. After this they were both led to the altar, prepared for the occasion in the middle of the church. Here the priest read, and the *diak* (deacon) sung about the reciprocal duties of the married. There were no vows, but simply an exchange of offerings by the bride and the bridegroom. After this, crowns were placed on their heads, and, thus adorned, they were led three times round the altar. This done, the ceremony terminated in the wedded couple again saluting each other with a kiss.

On my return from church, I received the mournful news of the demise of Colonel Krzyzanowski, which took place on the 1st of July. I felt sore at heart; but, upon reflection, found my grief was as inopportune as

it was useless. Why mourn over a man who had outlived the best part of himself? What had remained to him to render life desirable? Nothing—absolutely nothing! Even the memory of the past, the sole treasure of the unfortunate, afforded no solace to him in his adversity. Krzyzanowski had long since ceased to live. His bodily frame, once tenanted by so ardent a soul, had indeed, as far as the ordinary law of nature allowed, retained its vitality, but it did not represent himself. Peace be to his ashes! everlasting honour to his name!

But notwithstanding these reflections, I could not avoid feeling mournful; grief hung heavily over me, and would not quit me. I longed for repose, for solitude, but could not obtain it. Solitude fortifies the soul as repose recruits the failing strength of the body. In our own country, when we are in grief, night at least can take us under its protection, throwing its dark mantle over us; but here, they who suffer are bereft of this trusty friend. Day, unceasing day, is, whether they would weep or laugh, constantly staring them in the face. The heart closes before this impassive witness, who, devoid of all sympathy, intrudes with his bright gaze

on the privacy alike of our tears and our joys.*

In the midst of this grief, the post arrived and brought me letters, amongst which I instantly recognized the writing of my dear Paulina. What emotion did it awaken within me! a dizziness seized my head, and several minutes elapsed ere I dared to touch the long-coveted letter. I had most solemnly vowed, that during my absence from home, I would bear patiently whatever might happen to me, and would not pray to God for anything for myself, but only for the health and welfare of

* These reflections of our authoress remind us of a malignant device of the Grand-Duke Constantine, the elder brother of the Czar's, which he practised on some of his victims at Warsaw, confined in the dungeons of the Carmelite Convent. In addition to the ordinary strong guard at this prison, some of the Cossacks of his body guard, with particularly bright eyes and savage countenances, were placed with the prisoners in their cells, to stare at them continually. One of my friends, whose life is preserved, had the misfortune, while thus confined, to have such a companion sitting day and night by his side, looking at him without intermission, and the agony he endured, as he told me, was indescribable. So inventive is tyranny in the contrivances of torture!—Ed.


my dear children. Paulina's letter, therefore, would contain for me a sentence of life or death.

How hesitatingly I broke the seal! They were all living, thanks be to Thee, O God! But how was it that my heart did not burst with joy whilst I was reading the letter of my poor beloved Paulina? — treasuring up every word in which she so forcibly described her own sufferings, the intensity of her love, and the sacrifice which she was ready to make for me. She wished — she longed to join me here. Could I accept such an offer? or, ought she, ~~actuated~~ by so noble a motive, to be refused this solace? Could I push away a delightful child, when, tossed about and struggling amidst the stormy billows of life, she extended her arms towards me, praying for a refuge on her mother's bosom? Heavenly Father! to thee I look to direct me what to do!

Other letters arrived with Paulina's, strongly dissuading me from complying with her request, but the words of my child were still burning in my heart.

“I can hardly comprehend,” she wrote, “all

that is going on here, or what we do and what we ought to do. A crowd of conflicting interests and occurrences, changes of place, and variety of opinions and counsels, have completely confused my poor head, and I can scarcely arrange my ideas. O, my dearest mother ! what a heavy part has God assigned me on the earth. But I will not murmur, nor will I complain of the heavy weight, which surpasses my comprehension, and is beyond my strength. It has pleased God to impose this burden upon me, and I accept it. One wish only I breathe to Him, and that is my constant prayer that His protecting hand may at all times be extended over all our family, and that I may be one day allowed to unite with you. I call God to witness, how ardently I wish for the happiness of all my relatives, and that I am ready to devote to them all my thoughts, as I am even now doing. Yet, to strengthen my fortitude, I indulge the hope that I may be one day permitted to join you. With what inexpressible delight, with what ecstasy do I contemplate this prospect. Then, my dearest mother, I shall on your bosom breathe freely, after all my troubles and anxieties. But the moments in which I can dream



of this happiness are unfortunately few ; other thoughts, and my daily duties, allow me no leisure. And then I am haunted by the horrible thought that I may not be able to accomplish my project, but be doomed to be for ever deprived of you. Oh, how unfortunate should I be, were I bereft of that only consolation on earth.

“ Write me, dearest mother, that it is your wish that I should join you, and be assured that I am incapable of making a bad use of your permission. For if even all obstacles to my departure should be removed, and I should see that the well-being of my dear relatives required my presence here, I would then, of myself, willingly renounce the undertaking ; but, for the present, should the plan be found feasible, your consent to it is indispensable, both to the peace of my mind and our common action, by which alone my life is sustained.

“ Can you imagine, mother, you who are my only felicity, that there exist people here, who say that I should be committing the greatest folly if I were to go, and that you would yourself consider such a step a piece of madness. Beloved mother ! I am sure this could never be

so. Such a speech can proceed only from people who have no conception of the affection and love we bear towards each other. They do not know how much you love me, and I love you.

“They say that you will never permit my youth to be buried at Berezov. But you must know, dearest mother, how feeble have ever been the bonds that united me with the world here, and how all here are strangers to me, and I to them ; and so even now, I can say I live here comfortless, unconsolated, but with the hope that I may be enabled soon to depart hence, and exchange this part of the world, which is but a desert to me, for another desert, but which, when with you, will prove a world to me. O my beloved mother ! wherever destiny may cast us, if we only are together, there will be a world—there a dear native land to us.

“Do not, however, suppose, dearest mother, that in thinking of myself I am unmindful of my duties towards others, or forgetful of your own peace of mind and tranquillity. I am not ignorant that it is not I only who am bereaved here. You know how much I feel for the happiness of my relations ; and if for them a sacri-

fice on my part were required, were it even the renunciation of the hope of ever joining you, I should not for a moment hesitate, but submit to so imperative a call upon me—submit to it, perhaps, with a pang as to a great hardship, but yet always willingly, as far as my strength would permit. Three months have elapsed since we were informed of what was to be our own destination, and yet my thoughts continue so confused, that I know not what account to give you of our projects, or what arrangements we are to make with the children.”

After reading my daughter's letter, and perusing the letters of my friends, my mind was absorbed by the most conflicting emotions. Thoughts the most opposite, the most harassing, tore my heart with every breath, yet left me quite perplexed as to what course I should take. On the one side, when my Paulina's image presented itself before me—when I fancied my dear child, young as she was, struggling amidst such adverse circumstances, and opposed by a weight of misfortune far beyond her strength, then regardless of the distance, and of the almost insurmountable obstacles in her way,

and actuated solely by the instincts of my heart, I stretched out my arms to press her again and again to my bosom ; I felt that I could shield her tender age by my protection, and guard her young life from the blasts of adversity. But, on the other hand, when I considered the immensity of distance she would have to travel, and reflected on a multitude of incidents that might occur during so long a journey, I was frightened at the very thought, and doubted whether my own heart was not misguiding me. I remembered, too, the rest of my children, and reflected on their helpless situation. In the state of complete bereavement in which they were deprived of their parents and their patrimonial estate, and separated from their natural protectors, they had but Paulina to depend upon—her heart and her devotedness. Feeble and insufficient as that support was, in such trying circumstances, it was still all they had. Could I, by sanctioning Paulina's project, deprive them of this ? No, no !

None knew so well as myself how disproportioned was the energy of her mind to the constitutional delicacy of her frame. Natures of this kind are easier broken than bent. I was

afraid that my refusal to comply with her request might be attended with fatal consequences.

Pondering on arguments so conflicting, I began almost to despair. I had not even power to hold up my head, and it sunk helplessly on the pillow. A stupor such as I had never before experienced quite overpowered me, and thus I remained for several hours. Gradually, however, the violence of my first emotions made way for impressions less painful. I remembered that the Father of the fatherless watched over my children? And had He not hitherto protected them with his Almighty hand, better than I could do with my utmost solicitude?

They who have never been in situations similar to mine, will hardly understand the degree of consolation I received from religious resignation. I knelt down and raised my soul to God, and as I prayed I grew more calm. Even my letters, though containing some things that harrowed up my soul, afforded me, in others, a great measure of comfort.

I learnt that my infirm and bed-ridden mother, for a long time the object of my greatest anxiety, had recovered from her lingering illness, and with the resignation of a true Christian, outlived

the storms which had gathered with so much fury over our domestic hearth for the destruction of our family. I was informed that my children were not only in the enjoyment of health, but that the very disasters which had bereft them of parental protection, so necessary at their age, and destroyed all their prospects of the future, had only resulted in bringing their understanding to an early maturity; insomuch that my heart throbbed with a mother's pride when I read the account of their conduct. To God alone is known what will be their destiny!

Towards evening I took a walk with Josephine. A strong gale of wind had cleared the atmosphere of mosquitoes, flies, and gnats; and, though still suffering from violent headache, I felt refreshed. This was the first promenade I had had at Berezov without being either troubled by insects or interrupted by intruders. Silence, solitude, the calm of the twilight hour, and the freshness of the air contributed to soothe and cheer me. The pleasing aspect of nature whose genial influence I had for some time been prevented from fully and freely enjoying, tended in a great degree to revive in my bosom reliance on God, and trust in His infinite bounty—impressing me

with a belief that I was not yet His disinherited child. The very fact that my children were allowed to communicate with me and I with them, though at such a distance, and the glimpse of hope that flashed through my mind—uncertain and faint, yet arising spontaneously—that God might yet enable me to press at least one of my children to my bosom, threw light on the overcast horizon, and all the objects around, houses, woods, and water, appeared gladdened and cheerful.

Loitering along the river side we proceeded as far as the Waygulka. So delightful and snug did I find that secluded place that I was quite sorry to leave it. Poor Josephine, who had received no news from home, was, however, too depressed to enjoy it. It is commonly said that the unhappy are apt to feel more deeply for the sufferings of others than those who are in fortunate circumstances. I have no wish to dispute the proposition, but I may observe that my own personal experience does not confirm it, as, in comparison with my own, the misfortunes of all other people seem light and insignificant.

I am, however, ready to admit, that to be able to enter fully into the state of mind of

others, we must ourselves have first passed through many trials.

We lingered in our pleasant retreat as long as the lateness of the hour allowed, but we were at last obliged to wend our way home. We had scarcely crossed the threshold, when we came upon Madame X——, who commenced upbraiding us severely for not having taken her with us ; and as if to add to our distraction, the whole house seemed in an uproar. The landlady was scolding her children, the children were crying, and a smell of stale meat at once destroyed all the agreeable impressions we had derived from our walk. I bade Madame X—— good night, and hastily retired, seeking on my pillow quietness and seclusion.

This night we had the first frost.

CHAPTER XVII.

Early Autumn—Water excursion—Sand-banks—High tides—Autumnal aspect of Berezov—Solitary walk in the forest—Shamanic worshippers of larch-trees—Account of a woman who lost her way in the forest.

WITH the opening of August, the environs of Berezov assumed an autumnal air. Frost already nipped the more delicate plants, the leaves of trees were seared and yellow, and fell on the ground with the least breath of wind; the waters shrunk in volume, and the grass shrivelled. In a word, it was far advanced in autumn. It is, perhaps, as well, that summer here leaves not much to regret.

It was now much colder, especially at night; but the air was more bracing. The nights were also longer.

Autumn brought one welcome gift—the *go-*

lubica,* a berry, exactly like our own blackberry, the *szernice*,† only somewhat larger. It is found in abundance in the woods. We had a dish of these berries with cream, and found their flavour very pleasant.

Madame X—— arranged a water excursion on the Soswa, and being fond of water and boating, I gladly accepted her invitation to accompany the expedition. The lady of the director of the police promised to be one of the party.

After our preparations were completed, and we were on the point of starting, we found that, in spite of all Madame X——'s exertions, no man could be secured either to steer or to row; but not in the least discouraged by this difficulty—for she never flinched from the execution of a plan on which she had fixed her mind—Madame X—— decided to dispense entirely with the male sex, and engaged the services of two stout women as substitutes. I must confess for myself that I should have preferred the

* The *golubica* is derived from the Slavonic, *golub*, a dove, by which term, in popular language, everything lovely and precious is designated.

† French *mirtelles*.

assistance of a single man, even if he had been an Ostiak; but I would not throw cold water on the party, and I let things take their course.

Madame X——'s servant, as the most experienced amongst us, was placed at the helm, while that lady and myself, with another woman, took the oars. The weather was calm, and we crossed the river in safety, and disembarked on the opposite bank, on a dry sandy spot, covered with thin grass and willows. On landing we lighted a large fire, and as we had not forgotten to bring with us a *samovar*, that indispensable companion of the Berezovians on every occasion, we took it from our boat, filled it with water, and waited till it was boiling on the glowing embers. Up to that moment, everything appeared favourable; but in a few minutes a swarm of mosquitoes alighted like a thick cloud on the place, attacking us with the greatest fury. Having exhausted every means of defence, I seated myself on the ground, drew my feet under me, and threw my handkerchief over my head, but though somewhat protected, the position was neither convenient nor pleasant, and I looked with impatience for our pic-nic to end.

Tea having at last been prepared, we hastily partook of it, when the things were again packed up, and we set off homeward.

Arrived in the middle of the river, we found ourselves entirely freed from the mosquitoes, and we began to have a sense of enjoyment, this being in fact the only spot where we could obtain fresh air during the sultry season. As usual Madame X—— arbitrarily assumed dictatorship on the occasion, and prevented our boat from landing at the customary place in the bay, assuring us that she knew another much shorter way, and that by rowing in that direction, we should be disembarked close to our own house. I had never much confidence in her, as I had frequent experience of the absurdity of her pretensions; but there were no means of dissuading her, and we were obliged to proceed in the direction she indicated. Meanwhile the water having fallen low, as is commonly the case in autumn, and we not being sufficiently acquainted with the navigation, the boat stranded on a sand-bank. It was no easy task to get it afloat again and reach a deeper part of the stream. This, however, was not our last mischance. Madame X—— determined to have it

all her own way, and still persisted in carrying us home by the shortest passage; and we had not gone far when we got on another sand-bank, and we were this time several hours before we could get clear of it. The sun, indeed, was now sinking below the horizon, and we could not help murmuring at the imprudence of our obstinate guide, fearing that we should be detained on the river all night. At length Madame X—— consented to abdicate her authority; and profiting by our freedom we returned into the mid-channel and pushed for the usual landing, which to our great delight we soon reached, and just at twilight arrived home.

When safely seated, Madame X—— declared that it was not owing to her want of skill but to a series of extraordinary accidents, that we encountered so many unexpected obstacles during our expedition. I did not say a word in reply, but let her speak as she chose, only making a silent resolution never to venture again on any water excursion with women, unless under the protection of men. My only *souvenir* of the trip was miserably galled hands and an excruciating pain in all my limbs, which prevented my sleeping all the night.

The water of the Soswa had considerably decreased at this time, so that where a few days before large vessels were freely plying, we now saw either continuous dry land or countless islands. The bed of the river was not navigable throughout on account of the shallowness of the water. The mid-stream alone, except in a few deeper channels, could be safely navigated.

In the vicinity of Berezov the river rises to such a height during the spring, that on meadow-land where grass is growing during summer, large vessels of many hundred tons are safely carried by the current on their distant voyages. What, however, struck me as most remarkable was, that the highest tides should prevail till the beginning of August, and after that period gradually diminish until they reached the lowest water-mark in the bed of the river. As will readily be conceived the immense forests, stretching far and near, all containing vast masses of snow, pour into the Soswa and its tributaries a large volume of water; but snow commonly disappears before the end of June.

On the Ural mountains, and more particularly on the northern chain, snow remains indeed throughout the summer; but from this source,

as it lies below Berezov, we can scarcely suppose that the Soswa derives any supply. For my own part I attribute the rise of its waters to so extraordinary a height, to the circumstance that the earth in those parts of Siberia never thaws to any depth, and being frozen even in summer is deprived of the power of absorption, so that the water is consequently carried in undiminished volume to the sea of Oby. Another reason of the high tide may be the prevalence of the north wind from the Arctic Ocean. When this wind prevails even in summer, vast tracts of land near the river become inundated, whilst masses of snow and drifting ice are driven into the mouth of the river, obstructing its passage and so raising the water above its natural level.

As the time drew near for the dispatch of the post, I devoted a day to writing letters. Unable to help my children in anything, I resolved not to impose restraints on their actions. To my daughter I sent my consent to do what she thought best, convinced that the obstacles to her project of joining me, which I foresaw, would arise of other circumstances rather than my refusal, would render her lot easier to bear. Cherishing the hope of one day joining

me here, she would be more reconciled to our present separation.

Having finished my letters, I sent them to the Horodnitchee to be forwarded by the post, and went out myself for a walk. The aspect of everything was as dismal as can be imagined. The ground was strewn with autumnal leaves ; the grass had turned yellow and was perfectly withered ; the river had sunk into a narrow channel, leaving behind on either side extensive banks which but a few weeks previously had formed its bed. Such features imparted to the environs of the town a most melancholy character. Berezov, indeed, was now entirely disrobed even of those scanty festive habiliments under which, during the summer months, it had partially concealed its repulsiveness ; and I could not but liken it to an ungainly old actress, who, after performing the part of a young and beautiful princess on the stage, returns to her dismal lodgings in her own attire. Having thrown off her borrowed tinsel and wiped off the rouge from her shrivelled cheeks, she sits tired to death at the fire in her garret, in her ragged nightgown, and broods over the vanity of worldly distinctions.

But even the worst thing is not without its good side. The air, though cold, was now more pleasant than in the sultry summer. Mosquitoes had disappeared, and we were enabled to enjoy without inconvenience our out-of-doors promenade.

One day I went alone to the forest. On its outskirts I found a few fine mushrooms, which encouraged me to search for more. I proceeded farther, and at length, on looking round did not know where I was. As the sun was not shining, I was deprived of the only beacon by which I could safely direct my steps. I began to fear that I should be lost, a casualty that not unfrequently happens to the natives, these vast forests affording no clue to an outlet. At first I had taken my direction, as it seemed to me, towards the river—though even of that I was not sure—and as usual with those who know not their way, the imagination representing objects according to its particular bent, increased my perplexity. At every step I made, the forest appeared denser, wilder, and more sombre; and a deep monotonous sound of Æolian harmony alone broke the solemn silence. I would have given worlds could I have seen anything

animate or inanimate, that would have indicated to me the direction of the town, but each moment only bewildered me more. But convinced that a passive state of despondency would be of no avail, I continued advancing further and further. Uncertainty and consternation made the time appear exceedingly long, insomuch that it seemed as though I had been wandering for many weary hours. At length, emerging from the thicket, I saw before me a ravine intersecting the forest. I considered this a most fortunate discovery, and hastened to see whether some traces of water could not be found, and if so, in what direction it proceeded. In pursuing this track I perceived at the bottom of the defile a small streamlet, and presuming that it would sooner or later bring me to the river, I followed its course, as my only chance of escaping from the forest. At first I advanced, for some time, on the sloping side of the ravine, but finding my progress impeded at each step by thickets, and trunks of large trees, many of which, fallen from decay, lay rotting on the ground, I descended to its lowest part, where I found the passage less incumbered with obstacles. After a distance of about five hundred yards, I arrived

at a point where the ravine began to widen terminating in an open green plot of ground. Screened on three sides by lofty hills, this secluded spot yet preserved the verdure of summer, and contrasted strangely with the naked riven cliffs around. It was surrounded with a number of stately old larch trees, overshadowing the lonely nook with their sombre ever-green branches. So picturesque was this sequestered place, that I would gladly have remained there awhile to rest myself, only for my anxiety to get out of the dreadful forest, and, therefore, without tarrying a minute, I hurried onward.

In continuing my way through the defile I followed its meandering turns and kept close to my best guide, the streamlet ; constantly looking forward to see whether I could not catch a glimpse of open ground, when, turning a sharp angle, to my great astonishment—I cannot say satisfaction—I found myself on a sudden in the presence of a number of Ostiaks, with their faces turned towards the largest of the larch trees, and with strange gesticulations addressing the ancient trunk in a language to me utterly unintelligible.

Knowing perfectly well that the Ostiaks, according to their Shamanic religion, worshipped

the larch tree (*modrzessie*), I instantly divined the reason why they were assembled here ; but this, far from reassuring me, only increased my apprehension. "They will perhaps murder me," was my involuntary thought, "that I may not betray their secret;" for having accepted—or rather been compelled to accept Christianity—they were performing the rites of their idolatrous worship in secret ; and being ignorant wholly of their customs, I did not know to what extent I might not have offended them.

Had I seen any possibility of escaping, I should certainly have seized it, but aware that I was already observed, and that there was no chance of my getting past the assemblage without going close to them, and still less of being able to retréat by the ravine, which, besides being deep, was enclosed by high cliffs, I made a virtue of necessity, and assuming a mien of utter unconcern, though inwardly trembling with fear, I boldly advanced towards the throng, and passed through the midst of them.

The astonishment of the Ostiaks, which I saw depicted on their faces, was only equal to my own, when I found myself in their ranks. Not a word was addressed to me by any one of

them; and I was not disposed, as may be imagined, to break the silence. I pursued my way unmolested, and it happened, just as I had hoped, that the ravine brought me to the banks of the river Soswa, at no great distance from Berezov. In these parts losing one's way is an occurrence attended not rarely with loss of life. I became acquainted with the wife of a Russian *employé*, whose mother one day went out with some friends to seek berries, and wandering away from her party, got entangled in the forest, and notwithstanding the strictest search, not a trace of her was ever discovered. I know not how it was, but after my own misadventure, I could never meet this lady without conjuring up a most horrible picture of her mother's sufferings—how she must have perished either by dying a lingering death, or from famine and exhaustion, or by falling a prey to wild beasts.

I will here relate one of the shocking accidents which but a few years ago happened in this very district. I give it on the authority of a lady who acted a principal part in it, and herself related it to me. The occurrence took place at Kondisk, on the river Oby.

At the season of gathering berries, a party of young females of that village went to pick them in a neighbouring forest. One, in her search, unhappily separated herself from the rest of the company, and some time elapsed before they became aware that she was missing. They then shouted and hallooed as loud as they could, but all their calling was in vain. No answer was heard from any direction.

Meanwhile, the straggler, perceiving when too late that she had wandered so far from her companions, and all her efforts to rejoin them proving unsuccessful, thought to make her way home. Accordingly, she took what she thought the right track, but night came on, and she was still in the forest. When it grew quite dark, and she had lost all hope of retracing her way home, she climbed a tree, to be out of the reach of wild animals and snakes, and so passed the night.

The whole of the following day was spent in seeking to emerge from the forest, but with as little success as the preceding, and the poor creature only penetrated further into its depths. Hunger and exhaustion came on, and wild berries were the only sustenance she could

obtain. In vain she called for aid ; the wilderness, as if in mockery, echoed her cry on every side, but bore it to no human ear. Her strength was altogether failing, and she considered herself utterly lost, while death, apparently inevitable, presented itself to her imagination in a thousand horrible shapes. Now she fancied herself dying from hunger, as the berries on which she still subsisted would soon disappear, or from cold, or under the claws of some rapacious beast.

Soon she lost her voice, and could no longer call for help, but became with despair prostrate alike in body and mind. She sat for whole days cooped up and immoveable on the same spot, with patience awaiting her end. Want of food, as a mere craving of instinct, was alone able to arouse her for a moment from her torpor. Even when thus urged she unwillingly dragged her heavy limbs along, and having advanced a few steps from the spot, no sooner appeased her hunger with a few berries, than she relapsed into her previous apathy. In this condition she remained for no less than eight days.

On the ninth day, while snatching some berries from a tree, she heard at a distance a

rustling sound, like that made by a person making their way among dry branches. She listened, and as the sound fell on her ear more and more distinctly, she began to hope that it drew nearer. How full of moment to her was the anxious interval, as with each sound a distracting hope of deliverance rose in her mind.

After some minutes of intense expectation, alternating between hope and despair, the branches of the thicket parted, and she beheld a bear. Her first emotion was intense terror. Had she possessed sufficient strength she would have taken flight, but this desire instantly gave way to a different sensation: "God, in His great mercy," she murmured, "perhaps sends me a speedy end, instead of a protracted lingering death," and possessed by this impression she resigned herself to her fate.

The huge beast of the forest came within a few paces of the spot where she was. Calm and immoveable, agitated by no earthly desire, and nothing daunted, she stood resigned before him, a perfect statue of patience. After contemplating her a moment, the animal with an air of gravity turned away, and resumed his progress through the wood. The consternation which

the incident had inspired was now dispelled, and was succeeded by reflection. The first idea that rose in her mind was the belief prevailing among the natives, that a bear appearing to a wanderer is sure to lead him in the right path. This flashed across her brain with the velocity of lightning. Hope revived, and with it her courage; and as the bear moved on with slow steps, she followed him as close as her debilitated state would allow. The bear continued his rambling walk, casting at times his look behind, but though he saw her following, he neither increased nor diminished his pace. At last her strength completely failed, and the unhappy woman felt that she could go no further, and would be obliged to relinquish her guide. After a few tottering steps in advance, she was so overpowered with fatigue as to be compelled to sit down, and at this instant she saw the bear suddenly trot away, and disappear in the thicket.

Grief too keen to describe now overwhelmed her, as she was thus deprived of her last hope. The extreme exhaustion of physical powers was rendered more insupportable by great thirst, and to allay it she was compelled to look round

for some berries. As she did so, she perceived through the branches of the trees something shining like water. She drew nearer, and with joy saw a stream of running water at a short distance. She knew well that by following the course of the stream she would finally arrive at a larger river, and human settlements being always on the banks of rivers, would have a chance of being saved. The hope gave her strength, and gathering a few berries to refresh her, she proceeded onwards.

Night once more overtook her in the forest ; but on the morning of the next day she succeeded in reaching the spot where the stream emptied itself into the river. Not knowing now what direction to take, she sate on the shore, hoping that some boat might pass from which she could obtain help. In this expectation, she watched the whole day, but in vain ; no boat was to be seen.

On the following day, the twelfth since she had left home, she heard to her great joy the barking of dogs and occasional volleys of fire-arms. Fain would she have shouted for assistance, but she had altogether lost her voice, and even at a few paces distance no one could hear

the loudest cry that she could utter. Mustering all her remaining powers, she endeavoured to reach the spot from which the firing seemed to proceed, and which appeared to be near at hand. But she was not so fortunate as to meet any of the hunting-party; as the hunter, after he has fired, never remains in the same place, but advances to another, and thus, instead of meeting him where she expected, the faint, helpless woman could scarcely detect the scent of the gunpowder, and was again perplexed as to what direction she should pursue in search of him.

At last even the report of fire-arms grew more and more faint. From fear of losing sight of the river, she did not venture to go any farther, but returned to her former resting-place. Finally, all around relapsed into deep silence, and hope seemed to vanish for ever. In this painful condition, mourning bitterly that fate should so tantalize her, holding out a prospect of rescue and then destroying it, her eyes, languid and faint, involuntarily turned to the river, as if from that quarter alone she could hope for succour. How great, how unspeakable was her joy, when she descried a boat. She

made an effort to shout, to apprise its inmates of her forlorn condition, but without success, as her voice was powerless. Her despair was now indescribable, as she thought that the last opportunity of deliverance would pass by, and leave her to a most horrible death. In this dilemma she tore branches from the trees, and flung them in the water, hoping to attract attention by the splash; but thrown by so feeble a hand, this was not to be expected. She would have readily flung herself into the stream, if she had thought that the splash would have been heard, but a moment's reflection convinced her that the boat was at too great a distance for this to be possible.

The boat was now nearly abreast, and in another minute would pass by, when an idea struck her, which she instantly proceeded to realize. She had a red silk kerchief on her head, and this she immediately pulled off, and tying it on a long stick, waved it in the air. Most fortunately, the signal was perceived. The boat made for the shore, and took her on board.

The boatmen belonged to the same party as the huntsmen, whose firing she had so recently heard, and both had been sent out in search of

her. Her husband, children, and relatives had from the moment of her disappearance, been unremitting in exploring the forest; and when all their exertions proved unavailing, the whole population of Kondisk had been called upon to continue the search. Friends, neighbours and acquaintances turned out in a body to scour the inmost recesses of the forest. One party penetrating the thickets, shouted and discharged their guns, to apprise her of their presence, and in what direction she should seek them. Another went on the river, as the universal highway, and the safest, to which all who happened to lose themselves were accustomed to turn their steps, as their only trustworthy path in this vast wilderness. But, as if fortune were adverse, just at the moment when the unhappy woman perceived the boat, the boatmen were obliged, from the peculiar character of the navigation, to keep on the opposite side of the river at a considerable distance from her; and had they not been so unremittingly vigilant, looking for her in every possible direction, she must have miserably perished.

In this extraordinary manner, after twelve

days' absence from home, the poor woman was restored to her family, and I might almost say to life. Famished and worn out, she was also so altered in appearance, as to be scarcely recognisable, and looked more like a skeleton than a living being.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The library at Tobolsk—Popularity of novels at Berezov
—Tale-tellers—Samoiedes—Their tents, habits, and
religion — Tragic incident at Samarov — Kapustka
fête—Anna Piotrowna—Public opinion on seduction
—Alarm at the appearance of a bear.

RAINY days were raw and cold within, and out of doors made everything look gloomy and mournful. Fortunately for me in such weather, I had become passionately fond of working on canvas ; and to this occupation, trifling as it may seem, I was indebted for the most agreeable hours spent at Berezov. This kind of work concentrated my ideas, so that they diverged neither to the past nor the future, but were all directed to the task before me. The counting of threads, the stitching, and the sorting of the colours, do not allow leisure for abstraction ; and the in-

crease of the work beneath one's fingers gives an impulse to perseverance.

It is twilight. Reluctantly I rise from my working-frame. I cannot take any out-door exercise to close the weary day—nor can I for a moment stir from my chamber. The heavy rain falls with increased violence, and the streets stream with mud. I pass the “grey hour” of twilight in pacing the room in silent meditation. Ah, my meditations that I revolve in my solitude, they bring a whole world into my soul, calling into my presence, to this my lonely abode, glimmering with the last faint light of parting day, so many dear reminiscences, appearing for a moment, and then vanishing like shadows of a magic lantern.


Light is brought in. I must again think in what manner I may best spend the evening. Then sleep, that beneficent refresher, with its enchanting wand, may close my eyes, and conjure up, perhaps, in its bold pencilings and vivid colours, all the images which I so fondly cherish, and can only surrender with my existence.

In a country where there is no development of mind, and no intellectual way of passing the time, it was a most fortunate circumstance for

me, that, after all, I had a tolerable supply of books at my command. These are procured from Tobolsk, where there is a small library consisting of Polish, French and other works. It was founded by Count Peter Moszynski who, having possessed a copious collection of books, left it, on his return from banishment, for the use of those who might be similarly situated. The original collection has been enlarged by yearly accessions of new publications, which are procured from St. Petersburg by means of voluntary subscriptions for that purpose, made among the few Tobolsk literati, according to their ability. The books are kept in a building assigned to them, forming as it were a public property; and every subscriber has a right to take home such works as he may choose. In case of any one desiring to withdraw his contribution from the establishment, he is at liberty to take from the library books to the value of the amount. It is, however, seldom, that any of the subscribers, on quitting the place, avails himself of this liberal regulation.

I found more books at Berezov than I had at first anticipated. They consisted chiefly of novels, written originally in Russian, and

also translations from other foreign languages. It may be true, that these works had found their way here accidentally, and that love of literature had nothing to do with their importation. Still they met with an hospitable reception, and I have observed that the taste of the inhabitants for romantic tales and stories of life is more general than is, perhaps, imagined. They derive such a relish from all that is wonderful and extraordinary, that there is not a family that has not its favourite *baiïar* (story-teller), for the amusement of the domestic circle during the long evenings of winter. No sooner does this story-teller make his appearance, and take his privileged seat, than all the inmates of the house—master, children, servants, often even neighbours, old and young—hasten to gather round him. They take their places as they best can—some on chairs, some on benches, or on the floor, eager not to lose a word of the coming recital. By dint of constant repetition, the stories and fables related are not unknown to the assembled audience ; and indeed they know them almost by heart, insomuch, that, in case of any passages being omitted, or any deviation made from the well-known text, the



narrator is often corrected even by children. Nevertheless, these familiar tales are listened to with as much attention and delight, as though they were entirely new.

Most of the stories are of Russian origin ; and when told, portions are accompanied—like the different stanzas in some songs—by a sort of uniform *refrain* composed chiefly of words without any meaning, but which, after some parts of the narration, are constantly repeated, and even the more frequently from being more absurd. With respect to the novels, the more exaggeration and wonders, and the less probability they contain, the more are they admired. Some that I read, I found to be such a combination of absurdity and nonsense, that I was amazed how in the present age such trash could be written or thought worth publishing.

Of modern novels, the best were translations from foreign languages. Their circulation, however, was limited, as but a small number of the fair sex, were able to read with any fluency—reading being an accomplishment rarely met with here even among men, and still more rarely among women. As to the fair readers, they were considered great luminaries, though

really incapable of either reflection or argument. Any passages in their books having sublimity or delicacy of sentiment are skipped, and can neither warm their imagination nor touch their hearts. What is called platonic love, or the sentiment of honour in the sense understood by us, are entirely beyond the limits of their comprehension. They may excite curiosity, but awaken no sympathy. A man capable of staking his life in order to redeem his pledged word, though pledged, as is often the case, inconsiderately ; or a woman ready to devote the whole of her life to the man she loves, and maintaining that love sacred because she has inwardly vowed it in her heart, are accounted by them to be merely visionary conceptions, or at best incidents long banished from this sublunary world. Totally unable to understand how such high sentiments can become the mainspring of action, they consider them fabulous, like the histories of the paladins of old, who, single-handed, encountered armies of forty thousand men in battle, or who could take strong fortresses without the aid of a single soldier. Literary productions of this and the like romantic stamp, are eagerly devoured and much admired by the

Berezovians, and are also judged, as I have just hinted, not after our European, but by their own peculiar standard of criticism.

On paying a chance visit to a Siberian lady, and finding her sitting with a book by Châteaubriand or d'Arlincourt in her hand, as I have frequently done, I at first felt the greatest astonishment. But when I heard this same literary lady, whom I found poring over the pages of these authors, address her waiting-maid in a torrent of coarse abusive language, which no market-woman in our towns would use without blushing, I felt that she could not possibly understand what she was reading.

The Samoiedes, from the shores of the Frozen Ocean, arrive here in August to fetch corn-brandy, or whisky. Berezov is the last northern point in the government of Tobolsk, where that article can be obtained from the government stores. All the inhabitants of this cold clime betray an excessive proneness for intoxication, and therefore the Government deem it right to restrict the use of ardent spirits as much as possible by means of most stringent regulations framed for that purpose. Illicit importation of whisky into the interior is severely forbidden,

except what can be bought from the stores of this place, and it is even fixed by law what quantity of spirits can be obtained from the stores, either for private use or for sale. But, as it commonly happens in Russia, the intention of the law is set aside, and its best provisions defeated. The passion of the Ostiaks and the Samoiedes for intoxication is so strong, that they will travel a hundred versts for no other purpose than to muddle their heads with whisky, and thus large cargoes of it are smuggled to their settlements from other parts.

The Samoiedes* are taller and much finer men than the Ostiaks. Their hair and eyes are black, which is rather uncommon in the population of these parts. They shave their heads below, leaving some hair on the top, and this they comb down on the forehead. They do not allow their beards to grow, and it is customary both with themselves and their neighbours, the Ostiaks, to tear their hair out by the roots while it is young, and then it does not

* The term *Samoied* is Slavonic, and signifies *self-eater*. But whether these people were ever cannibals is not ascertained; now, at least, no such crime can be laid to their charge.

grow again. Their language is different from that of the Ostiaks. They speak with a nasal twang, and very indistinctly; not from any defect in their organs of speech, but from a peculiarity of their idiom. In their costume, the Samoiedes do not much differ from the Ostiaks. Their dress consists of reindeer skin, with the only difference that that of the Samoiedes is arranged with more care and taste.

The Samoiedes occupy the principal part of Western Siberia, extending their nomade settlements along the shores of the Frozen Ocean, from the Uralian Mountains to the river Lena. The whole extent of the territory inhabited by their tribes is marshy to such a degree, that it is devoid of all forests, as none of the larger trees, with the exception of osiers, can grow on the boggy ground. In this respect they are by far worse off than the Ostiaks, who are favoured with plenty of fuel, and are protected by large forests from the cold. The miserable osiers and low brushwood are all that the Samoiedes have for fuel, while small tents of reindeer skins, pitched on snow, are their only refuge from the weather. These tents are of a comical shape, and in their language are called *tchoum*. They

are transportable from place to place, which operation is performed several times in the course of the year, or rather as frequently as the necessity of hunting or fishing may require. Under such wretched shelter, children are born and brought up; and, what is most wonderful, they are healthy and robust. Fishing and hunting are the Samoiedes' only means of subsistence. They sometimes keep a considerable number of reindeer, which in years when the chase and fishing fail, are appropriated for food.

It is on the extensive marshy plains along the shores of the Frozen Ocean, occupied by the Samoied tribes, that the valuable white reindeer are found in greatest number, and they constitute the principal object of commerce in that region. The natives hunt these animals, and their skins represent money, by means of which all other commodities are obtained. Various species of foxes, which fetch high prices, also come from this district, as do blue *cams lopagas*, ermine, and ducks called *gagarki*, the down of whose necks is very much prized for its exquisite beauty, and after undergoing a certain process, is used to ornament pelisses.

The costume of the Samoied women is, with some trifling distinctions, nearly the same as that of the Ostiak women. They wear girdles round the waist, ornamented in front with large plates of brass, emblazoned with various figures. The plates are commonly of a circular form, and broad enough to cover nearly the whole of the chest. From these hang strings of beads and sounding pieces of metal, which dangle about in front. Bells are often fastened as ornaments to the elbows.

The Samoiedes are to this day idolaters, following the tenets of their ancient Shamanic religion. They worship the sun, the moon, and the works of nature, in so far as these engage their attention, either by their uses or their beauty. A beautiful tree, a stone, a river, or a lake, if it captivate their eye, at once secures their reverence and adoration. Their religion has little spirituality. It teaches that the gods of their race are sojourning amidst them, and often show themselves in human form, in the Samoiedan costume. These divinities take every possible interest in the earthly concerns of the tribes, warning them whether they will succeed or fail in their fisheries; whether the hunting season

will be prosperous, or the reverse ; and whether the year will be one of famine or plenty.

This faith is far from being based exclusively on ancient traditions ; it forms part of their actual life. At the commencement of every year, a rumour is mysteriously circulated amongst them of an augury presaging what is to occur in the ensuing twelve months, which is said to have been announced to some one by the national deity in person. The revelation is usually made on the banks of a river, or in the depth of a forest. The Russians themselves, notwithstanding their profession of Christianity, do not refuse belief in these prognostications, and admitting that a Samoied god may appear to a Samoied, they urge only that he is inferior to the Christian God. In proof of this, many most absurd stories are circulated, and foolishly received as gospel truths. Among these is one relating how an Ostiak god, meeting a Christian priest, challenged him to a contest of skill in working miracles, which was accepted by the priest ; and after many marvellous efforts on the part of the Ostiak god, he was, of course, to his great vexation and shame, completely discomfited by the priest.

On the last day of August, the frost was so intense that the ground was frozen as hard as it is in Europe in the month of December. Vessels which had been out to the sea fisheries began to return home ; and among the arrivals was our landlord, who I expected would have brought a large cargo of fish ; but all that he caught had been salted and sold to the merchants of Tobolsk. The Berezovians never eat salt fish, and speak of it with disgust.

The returned ships brought intelligence of one of the most tragic events which had occurred here within memory, and it engrossed the whole attention of the public for some time. A merchant of Samarov, a place I have before mentioned, was with his vessel at the fisheries in the Oby Gulf, and was returning home with a cargo of salt fish, with the intention of proceeding afterwards to Tobolsk, according to his annual custom, to dispose of it. Arrived, however, within a short distance of Samarov, his vessel stranded on a sand-bank, and from want of proper succour was wrecked, and all the cargo lost. The merchant and crew were saved, and came on in two small boats to their native village.

1

To give him a good reception on his return his wife, according to the custom of the country on similar occasions, had the *samovar* and tea awaiting him, and his neighbours came in a body to join in the welcome. The arrival of a vessel in so lonely a locality is always reckoned among important events, and usually attracted the curiosity of everybody in the neighbourhood. But all this attention and friendly demonstration of sympathy had no effect on the merchant. They could not dispel from his mind the dark melancholy caused by the loss he had sustained. In vain his affectionate wife tried to cheer, his neighbours to console him ; in vain his little son, a boy of three years, fondly crept round his knees, to soothe his grief. He looked on with tears in his eyes, and remained silent and disconsolate. Before the tea was poured out he left the room, and only a few minutes had elapsed when a servant rushed in, and announced the dismal intelligence that his master had hung himself.

On hearing this, the guests, struck with horror, hurried to the spot where the suicide was committed. They saw the merchant hanging, and instantly cut the rope ; and as he was

not entirely strangled, succeeded in recalling life. The disturbance caused by the event having somewhat subsided, the company were returning to the apartment they had just left, when a horrible spectacle burst upon them. The *samovar* had upset, and the little boy of three years falling under it, was deluged with boiling water, and was rolling on the floor, his whole body a perfect blister. The next day the child died. The merchant, who previously had not sufficient fortitude to bear up against the loss of his cargo of fish, was strangely enough able to drain this cup of bitterness, looking on his beloved child—his only son—dying in this dreadful agony.

I received an invitation to an horticultural *fête*, called *kapustka* (cabbage), from which it will be seen that that vegetable has found its way to Berezov, but though planted here, owing to the shortness of the summer, the bulb does not attain any perfection. It is gathered in leaves, which are chopped in thin pieces, and a dish called *barshteh* prepared from them.

The usual season for gathering cabbage is when frost sets in. At that time, it is customary for every lady who possesses a cabbage-

garden, to choose some day which may be most convenient for her female relations and friends to come and work in her garden. The whole task being accomplished in one day, the fair labourers go in turn on succeeding days to other fields to perform the same. In my own case, having intimated to my landlady my willingness to assist in the work, I was invited with the rest of her female friends.

We all proceeded to the cabbage-field, and there cut the leaves from the tiny stalks with knives, and deposited the whole of the crop in a room. Large troughs were then brought, and filled with the leaves which we had first chopped and salted, layer after layer. This done, we carried the salted cabbage to a cellar, and packed it in wooden tubs. While the process of chopping was in progress, one of the party sang a lively song. Our work completed, we had tea and other refreshments. Then followed dancing but without music, or the attraction of male partners, though the good-heartedness and cheerful disposition of the company made amends for all other deficiencies.

As I took no part in the dancing, I accosted one of my fellow-reapers, whose expressive coun-

tenance and delicacy of demeanour had particularly struck me. She was probably past thirty; but she was still a handsome young woman. Her pale, delicate face, and her black eyes full of sweetness and melancholy, possessed a charm which I could not resist. I took a seat at her side, and, to open a conversation, asked her why she did not dance.

"It is not for me to dance," answered Anna Piotrowna. "I must husband my strength, that I may be able to work for my two children, who are maintained by my labour."

This answer made me feel still greater interest in her. "Are you a widow?" I inquired.

"No; I am married," said she. "My husband is in the employ of the Governor-General at Omsk, and, as I am told, very well off."

"What occasion can there be then for you to work for your children?" I asked.

Mournfully shaking her head, Anna Piotrowna replied in a tone of sorrow: "What can a woman do with a husband who is forgetful of his duty? For two years he remembered the children, and sent us some money, but he has since entirely forgotten me and

them. For twelve years I have been left without any resources, compelled to provide for the subsistence of my family ; and until my eldest son grows up, my labour can know no intermission. From my needle-work I have contrived to give him such education as can be had in this town. A good and intelligent boy he is, employing his time at school in the best manner. He has learnt to read and to write, and I have procured him the post of clerk in the government office at Tobolsk, where he is already in a fair way of gaining his livelihood ; and when he writes letters to me the people wonder at his beautiful writing, and say that it looks like an engraving. I have besides to maintain my aged father, who is not able to do any work. My daughter is approaching womanhood ; and ere long she may be married, when she will need some dowry. So much is expected from the exertions of one poor woman !”

“ Why do you not write to your husband ?” said I. “ It is impossible that he should withhold from his family the support and protection he is bound to give.”

“ Do you think he does not know how we

are situated?" was her reply. "I wrote to him indeed several times; but when I found that he would not answer my letters, I ceased to trouble him, trusting that God would take us under His protection."

"If your husband refuses you and your children voluntary assistance, you might obtain it by law. You have only to draw up a complaint against him, and the government would order a deduction of a portion of his salary for the maintenance of his family."

"Many times have I received this advice, but the idea of such a course is too repulsive to me," she replied.

"No doubt, that is a noble sentiment; but for the sake of the children, you should not shrink from taking this step. With a larger income, you might give your son a better education, and even get your daughter better married."

"All you say is perfectly true; yet, apart from the aversion I feel to any such measure, there is another obstacle connected with it—and that is, my husband and myself were not lawfully married."

My cheek crimsoned on hearing this confes-

sion ; I was confounded, and did not know how to continue the conversation, not from any undue prudery, which at my age would have ill become me, but from the consciousness of the pain which I thought that I must have caused this poor woman, in forcing her, by my untoward questions, to so unwelcome an avowal, which, as I imagined, could not be made by any woman without the greatest anguish. Happily, the daughter of our landlady at that very moment accosted us, and diverted the conversation into a different channel. I cast a timid look at Anna Piotrowna, but, to my surprise, did not perceive in her features any of that confusion which I experienced myself.

This circumstance gave me much to think of. I was, I confess, quite at a loss to reconcile the severe propriety observed in our landlord's family with the respect shown by them to Anna Piotrowna, who was, in fact, the chosen friend of all. There was not a festival to which she was not invited, and no incident happened in the family, in which she, as a friend, did not participate.

In the evening of the following day I invited our landlord to play chess with me—a game of

which he was extremely fond. As our game progressed, I purposely led the conversation to the subject of Anna Piotrowna, and at the same time stated how much our European opinions would condemn her conduct. From his reply, I discovered that, while we visit an imprudent woman, seduced from the path of virtue, with irrevocable condemnation, ejecting her from society as one branded with indelible dishonour, without considering the extenuating circumstances which might be adduced to diminish her guilt, the Siberians, with primitive feelings of justice, lay all the blame on the seducer. If the woman has sought the mere gratification of her passion, and not a matrimonial alliance ; or, in other words, when both parties not being free, could not by any means have seriously contemplated marriage ; or when the man has not held out a promise of this kind, public opinion treats the unhappy woman with inexorable severity. But if, on the other hand, a young woman has the misfortune to be abandoned, and her lover deserts her without any fault on her part, she becomes rather an object of commiseration than of reproof, and the man alone is condemned.

In such cases, the woman loses as little in the opinion of the public as would a creditor who, in all good faith, has intrusted his capital to a man who turns out a bad debtor. With respect to Anna Piotrowna, as no levity could be laid to her charge, and no fault could be found with her conduct ; and as she was scrupulously discharging the duties of a mother, making every possible sacrifice for her children, she received from all the greatest sympathy. Far from persecuting or despising her, the good people here commiserated her hard lot, and as far as they could, helped her to bear up against it.

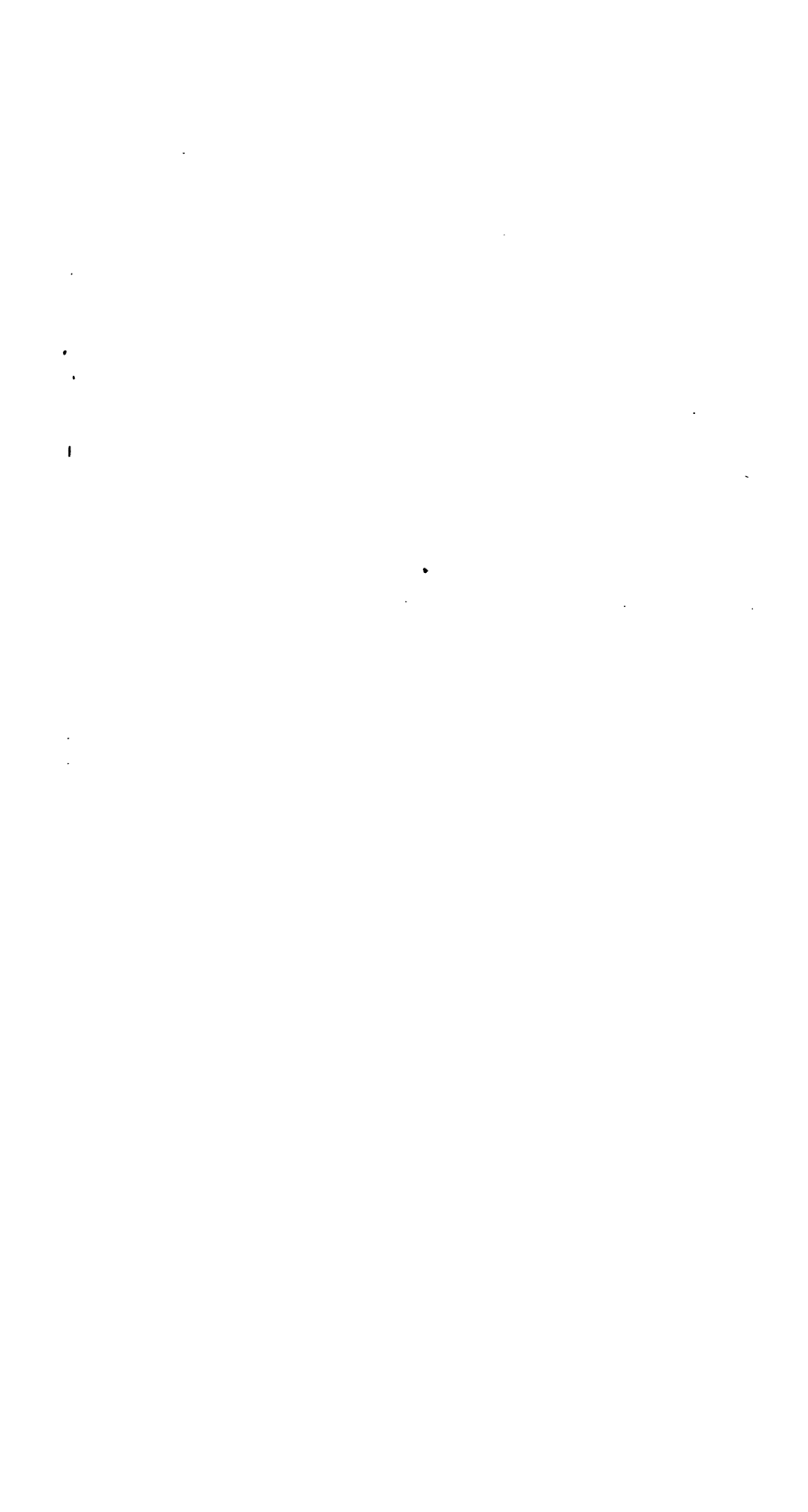
Before we had finished our game at chess, Madame X—— rushed almost breathless into the room, with the intelligence that her brother, a young merchant, had just returned from the forest, where he had been hunting ; and while traversing the thickets, had seen, at a few steps from the spot where he stood, a huge bear tearing to pieces a dark cow. Panic-stricken, as may easily be imagined, he had instantly taken to his heels, and coming into town, thrown every one into the greatest alarm.

The bear immediately became the only topic of conversation among the inhabitants. Everybody gave his own version of the incident, and the young merchant was congratulated on his good-luck in having escaped from the animal unhurt.

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